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THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS
OF

Amy Lowell



Books by Amy Lowell included in this volume

A DOME OF MANY-COLOURED GLASS

SWORD BLADES AND POPPY SEED

MEN, WOMEN AND GHOSTS

CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE

PICTURES OF THE FLOATING WORLD

LEGENDS

FIR-FLOWER TABLETS

A CRITICAL FABLE

WHAT'S O'CLOCK

EAST WIND

BALLADS FOR SALE

and six previously uncollected poems

NOV 3 0 1957

THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS
OF

Amy Lowell

With an introduction by
LOUIS UNTERMEYER



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A MEMOIR

It is almost impossible to separate the legendary and the real Amy Lowell. She was to a great extent the victim of her fabulous quest for novelty, and the legend of her inexhaustibility — a myth which she herself accepted — was probably responsible for her death. No one knows just how many poems she actually wrote, but some six hundred and fifty were preserved in the eleven published volumes brought together in this comprehensive collection, to say nothing of uncompleted and unprinted verses. More impressive, and more significant of the varied interests which compelled her and the drives which undid her, was her bewildering range of ideas and idioms, a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of style and subject matter.

There was little evidence of that range when her first volume was launched on the perilous seas of criticism. I remember that my own review was not only generally patronizing but cruel in its particulars. Unaware of the devotion which was to become a lifetime preoccupation, I implied that the author had not freed herself from a fatuous, fancied kinship to Keats, that her tone was belatedly Tennysonian, and that her indebtedness to Shelley was implicit in more than the title of her book, *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*. That was in 1912.

Two years later, when her next volume was published, it seemed that a wholly new poet and, what was more, a new epoch had appeared. *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* sounded some of the first notes in the controversy which raged about the New Poetry. The book heralded the era's growing dissatisfaction with traditional measures and the determination to try new verse forms, strange cadences, and unfamiliar responses to standard sentiments. It startled readers with the first English examples of "polyphonic prose," which John Gould Fletcher claimed he invented, and a series of glittering and often bizarre images, which her detractors charged had been borrowed from the then-emerging Imagists.

The Amy Lowell legend was already in the making; fact and fantasy began to interweave. To the proper Bostonians she was the oddity, locally famous, born February 9, 1874, of an illustrious family descended from Percival Lowell who came to Newburyport in 1637. James Russell Lowell, critic, first editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and wittiest of the New England poets, was her grandfather's cousin. Percival Lowell, the astronomer who in 1905 mathematically proved the existence of a new planet Pluto, and maintained that evidence of "canals" indicated living intelligences on Mars, was a brother. Another brother, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who con-

fessed he understood little of her poetry, was president of Harvard College.

Amy was educated privately at home and abroad. A precocious small girl, she made her literary debut at the age of eleven. A book entitled *Dream Drops, or Stories from Fairy Land* was a composite effort, chiefly written by her mother and her much older sister, Elizabeth, but it contained contributions by the child. It was published by the Boston firm of Cupples and Hurd and the edition was sold out.

In her teens she exchanged her visions of fairyland for dreams of the theater. She had fallen in love with Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse; she abandoned hopes of becoming an actress only when a glandular disbalance turned the unusually pretty girl into an abnormally fat woman, "a walking side-show," she said with a mixture of self-pity and self-contempt.

She was forty when I first met her. I was prepared for the monstrous distribution of flesh — although a short woman, she weighed well over two hundred pounds — for the cigars with which she affronted genteel society, and the armada of immense English sheepdogs which intimidated strangers but which were less watchdogs than substitutes for the children she never had. What I was not prepared for was the extraordinary delicacy as well as the dignity of the woman. Instead of seeming a rakish masculine affectation, the cigar merely accentuated her essential femininity. ("My doctor tells me that the paper is what makes cigarettes injurious," she explained.) The disproportionate bulk was forgotten the moment she spoke, for the voice, half prim, half peremptory, drew attention to the tiny mouth, to the fastidiously fine features, the almost transparent porcelain skin, the quizzical but not unkind eyes. I noticed also the incongruously small hands and little ankles. I had heard that her bed was made of two dozen pillows, mattresses being too hard for her, and that the tires of her Pierce Arrow were inflated to only half the normal pressure so that the car would ride without jouncing. With a close friend, Ada Dwyer Russell, a former actress, she lived in a house called Sevenels, not, as has been supposed, because of the seven ells in the structure, but because of seven Lowells. All the doorknobs were sterling silver. The appointments were luxurious, but her working life was strict and severe. Everything possible was done to separate the private poet and the public person.

To safeguard her flights of imagination, as well as her privacy, she kept peculiar hours. She freed herself from most people's usual duties, the daily demands, unsolicited visits by friends, the importunities of the telephone by sleeping during the day and working at night. It was her custom to wake at about three in the afternoon, consult her housekeeper across a fou

o'clock breakfast tray, go over the previous night's notes with her two secretaries — one for her creative writing, one for her business affairs — and come down to dinner about eight. Frequently there were guests, important notables as well as little-known poets she was cultivating; but they were aware of her schedule, and their cars were always ordered for eleven-thirty. At midnight she went to her room and began to write, transcribe, and revise. Somewhere between five and six, just before the rest of the household came to life, she would go to bed. It was a way of life any artist might like to enjoy — if he could afford it.

By the time we became friends, Amy Lowell was well on the way to being a celebrity. After she gave up the last hope of appearing on the stage she planned to write for it. When this, too, failed she decided — determined, she said — to be a poet. Waiting until she was thirty-eight before publishing her first mature book, she studied the techniques of verse making, analyzed the way in which the masters had achieved their effects, and paid particular attention to the methods of the innovators. Even before *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* was off the press she heard of a few experimenters who had their headquarters in London and who, under the aegis of Ezra Pound, called themselves Imagists. Amy Lowell "invaded" England, met Pound head on, convinced his conferees that she was an even more pugnacious dictator than Pound, and "captured" the group — with the obvious exception of Pound. Returning triumphantly to America, she presented her fellow insurgents to the public in three annual volumes (1915, 1916, 1917) entitled *Some Imagist Poets*. The collections included John Gould Fletcher, "H. D.," D. H. Lawrence, among others, as well as Amy Lowell herself, all of whom rebelled against the "morbid romantic attitude and outworn false generalities" in favor of "the hard, definite word and the clear, uncluttered image." Pound fumed and threatened suit. Amy was delighted. She knew that neither a title nor a school of poets could be copyrighted and, with a flair for publicity which would have made her another fortune as a promoter, wrote him that his suit would be "a good advertisement" and would increase sales of the venture. Pound, occupied with paraphrases from the Chinese, replied (in a letter to me) that he had "no objection to the pleasure others have had in exploiting the label and offering cheap imitations, but I regret the loss of critical distinction between poetry which uses no word which does not contribute to the presentation — and verbosity." He disassociated himself from the American publications of the Imagists and always referred to the group as the "Amygist" movement.

Amy Lowell resented the charge of high-handedness. Pound, she wrote in one of the first letters I received from her, "would have ruined the movement, important though it was, as he has ruined everything he has touched . . . The only thing I object to in your article is your saying that it was under his leadership that 'the Imagists became not only a group but a fighting protest.' It was nothing of the sort. The Imagists during the year and a half in which he headed the movement were unknown and jeered at, when they were not absolutely ignored. It was not until I entered the arena and Ezra dropped out that Imagism had to be considered seriously . . . The name is his; the idea was widespread. But changing the whole public attitude from derision to consideration came from my work."

She began waging a battle on two fronts. She fought with equal ardor as propagandist and poet; she stalked the ramparts of her own beleaguered citadel, went forth to shout down her critics, and stormed enemy battlements clear across the country. She reminded one of Theodore Roosevelt who had the gift of sensing the turn a tendency was about to take and, recognizing the strength of a movement, would place himself at the head of it. Also, in common with Roosevelt the First, she knew when to take up a cause and when to abandon it. When the cult of Imagism broadened into a struggle for free verse she championed *vers libre* in dozens of prefaces, reviews, articles, and on countless public platforms. When the *vers libretines* gave up their freedom for more orthodox forms, she returned to orderly couplets, strict tercets, rhymed narratives, even to old-fashioned ballads. When Japanese and Chinese poetry became a vogue, she turned a fashion into a lasting achievement with her "adapted" *Fir-Flower Tablets*.

Meanwhile, she was busy with her own poems. Their development as well as their changing centers of interest may be traced in the books which she wrote while beating the drums for her colleagues and haranguing apathetic reviewers. The stories in *Men, Women and Ghosts*, published when she was forty-two, range from experiments in free verse, which project "unrelated" patterns reminiscent of abstract paintings, to tales in "polyphonic prose," which is prose only in its typographical arrangement. The gamut widened from the opening "Patterns," which caused a sensation upon its appearance and became the most anthologized of her poems, to the grim New England narratives, a counterpoint to Frost's *North of Boston*, in "The Overgrown Pasture." Two years later *Can Grande's Castle* extended the limitations of polyphonic prose to sound the widest possible variations in metre, altering the beat to permit long flowing cadences, and mixing rhymes irregularly to achieve a contrapuntal form

with orchestral sonority. In "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" she was able to pack the entire drama of Nelson and Lady Hamilton in a fluctuating progression, half narrative and half oratorio; "Guns as Keys: And the Great Gate Swings" employed the form to contrast "the delicacy and clarity of Japan and the artistic ignorance and gallant self-confidence of America."

She was also hard at work getting a hearing for the poems. A new book was not merely a publishing venture but a campaign. She saw to it that no editorial office, no inner sanctum, was barred to her. Her social standing, her affluence, her militant reputation, her unquestionable charm — she used them all. Her trips to New York, which she considered enemy territory, were planned with expert generalship. Her headquarters were a suite in the Hotel St. Regis. There she held court. Clocks were stopped so that the ticking would not remind her of the passing of time. Windows were draped, and all the mirrors were hidden behind heavy dark hangings. Every poet feels himself to be a disembodied if not a blithe spirit, especially when the fit of inspiration is on him, and Amy Lowell would not risk confronting the sensitive afflatus with the gross reality of all that too, too solid flesh.

From the St. Regis she plotted her plan of war and drew up the battle lines. She maneuvered to get what she considered the best men to write the best reviews for the best mediums. She summoned editors — and they came. She cajoled, browbeat, and generally captivated her critics — and, though they were not certain that she was a great poet, they were convinced that she was a great personality. Sometimes there was a note of belligerence underneath the blandishments. "You advertise so much in the *Times*," she complained to her publisher, "that you ought to force them into a somewhat less hostile attitude." "I have to be my own impresario," she told me. "There's no point in having a trumpet — or any brass — if you don't blow it."

Trumpets were sounded whenever she argued about poetry; they rang out with special vigor when she spoke of those who opposed the New Dispensation. It took years to transform her ivory tower into a steel-ribbed fortress and to maintain herself on that eminence. Once there, she provoked the attackers to do their worst. "Let them come and push me off," she challenged. "I dare them!" It was a dare that none would accept; it was not merely the picture of her physical bulk which intimidated any possible combatants but the knowledge of her doughty and indomitable spirit.

As a conversationalist she was both pugnacious and persuasive. Heywood Broun recalled a gaily inconsistent talk in which she used every feminine

wife to attack feminism. Broun's wife, Ruth Hale, was a belligerent feminist, a charter member of the Lucy Stone League, and Broun attempted to defend the movement. "Amy Lowell leaned back," said Broun, "in a big, easy chair, puffing one of her Manila cigars. 'I have (puff, puff) no patience,' said Miss Lowell, 'with the new-fashioned woman (puff, puff) and her so-called rights. I believe (and here she drew deep of the cigar) in the old-fashioned, conservative woman and all her limitations.'"

She was equally certain about the need for maintaining social and economic conventions, but she was troubled about them. "It is hard to be a true poet," wrote Malcolm Cowley in an otherwise unmalicious review, "when one is rich, blanketed with four per cent debentures and rocked to sleep in a cradle of sound common stocks." With a gentler irony Vachel Lindsay said she was equipped to be not only the state laureate but the Senator from Massachusetts. She was not unaware of a certain ambivalence, a split which separated the poet from the politician, but she showed her consciousness of it on only a few occasions. I remember one of the occasions when the implications of her wealth worried her. We were attending a performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, a drama of class conflict which pictured an uprising in the 1840's. Anticipating Ernst Toller's violent *The Machine-Wreckers*, Hauptmann's play reached its climax as the Silesian workers, starving and desperate, destroy not only the machines, which they hold responsible for their distress, but proceed to smash the home of their employer. Amy Lowell could not help thinking of the industrialized town of Lowell which had been named for her forebears and she, who sometimes referred to herself as "the last of the barons," flinched. "This is the future," she whispered as the curtain came down on a scene of pillage. "That is what is going to happen to me!"

That it was unlikely to happen in her time—and in Brookline—scarcely comforted her. The top floor of Sevenels became more and more of a tower soaring over if not altogether safe from the threatening future. There her dreams, translated into poems, became increasingly dramatic and varied, alternately realistic and escapist. Her early love of the theatre led her to find dramas not only in the events of the day but in forgotten fables, stray items tucked away in old newspapers. *Pictures of the Floating World* begins with a set of Japanese lacquer prints, expands into odd "chinoiseries," and develops into startling "planes of personality," tender in "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" and "A Decade," bizarre in "Gargoyles," archaic in "Appuldurcombe Park," revealingly grotesque in

"Dreams in War Time." *Legends*, the most wide-ranging of her volumes, includes an amalgam of Peruvian myths, "Memorandum confided by a Yucca to a Passion-Vine," which sprang from a sentence embedded in Garcilasso de la Vega's saga of the Incas; an Indian song-story, "Many Swans," based "on a Kathlemet text translated by Dr. Franz Boas;" "The Statue in the Garden," a Roman tale found in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; to say nothing of enlargements of folkstuff from Yucatan, Europe, and New England. The lush variety of material, style, and subject matter flashes through the posthumously published *What's O'Clock*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1926. It culminated in her much-quoted apostrophe, "Lilacs," the poem of hers she liked best, with its climatic — and climactic — evocation:

*Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under the soil of New England,
Lilac in me because I am New England,
Because my roots are in it,
Because my leaves are of it,
Because my flowers are for it,
Because it is my country
And I speak to it of itself.*

A Critical Fable is a further proof of her versatility. Frankly modeled on James Russell Lowell's *A Fable for Critics*, even to the rhymed title page, it was published anonymously. When suspected of its authorship Amy Lowell vehemently denied it. ("From the moment I opened the book I said to myself: Louis is the only person who would have been likely to write this book . . . and now you hastily forestall me by suggesting that I have done it — which is one of the neatest little side-steppings I have ever seen!") Although purists complained of the rough rhythms and rougher rhyming, the hit-or-miss lines accomplished many palpable hits. There was penetration and no little humor in her half cutting, half kindly disposals of the leading (and several minor) American poets of her day.

She was a very sick woman when she began her two-volume biography of Keats. "Keats is nearly killing me," she informed me when she was in the midst of it. I did not take the sentence seriously, for I had no idea how grievously the work was affecting her already overburdened body. Long before she undertook to track down all Keats's associations, annotations, and the smallest of minutiae, she had written me, "Do try and get here as early as possible before they have quite minced me to pieces and swept me up in the dustpan." I never knew how terribly handicapped she was by a double hernia that was continually "patched up" but which would

never completely heal. Besides, she seemed to delight in multiple commitments; she was not herself unless she was continually attacked, belabored, and occupied to the point of exhaustion. She had written critical books on *Six French Poets* as well as *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, and she had amplified the concepts in these books into reviews, lengthy articles, and countless lectures. She had helped start a series of biennial anthologies which we had entitled *A Miscellany of American Poetry* (Frost, Lindsay, Robinson, Sandburg, Aiken, and Teasdale were among the first to be included), and her correspondence about other candidates was constant and often incontinentally sharp.

She almost literally gave her lifeblood for Keats. The youthful infatuation for the greatest of lyric poets led to a lifelong passion which was part identification, part obsession. She was certainly thinking not solely of Keats when she wrote, "The stigma of oddness is the price a myopic world always exacts of genius." "How hard, how desperately hard, is the way of the experimenter in art!" And there is not so much analysis of her subject as self-revelation when she wrote: "I do not suppose that anyone not a poet can realize the agony of creating a poem. Every nerve, even every muscle, seems strained to the breaking point. The poem will not be denied; to refuse to write it would be a greater torture. It tears its way out of the brain, splintering and breaking its passage, and leaves that organ in the state of a jelly-fish when the task is done."

It was sometimes said that Amy Lowell had everything a poet should have except passion, that she had perception but lacked feeling, that (in the words of one of her critics) she substituted motion for emotion. A few days after her death on May 12, 1925, Heywood Brown penned an obituary tribute in the *New York World* which took up the animadversions. "She was upon the surface of things a Lowell," wrote Brown, "a New Englander and a spinster. But inside everything was molten like the core of the earth. . . . Given one more gram of emotion, Amy Lowell would have burst into flame and been consumed to cinders."

Her final place in the history of American literature has not yet been determined. Controversy regarding the impact and quality of her poetry still goes on — it has become the fashion to say that she is the poet of the external rather than the internal world. But succeeding generations have a habit of reversing contemporary estimates, and it is more than likely that she will be enthusiastically rediscovered. In any case, the importance of her influence remains unquestioned. Underneath her preoccupation with the need for novelty, the disruption of traditional patterns, and other

theoretical departures, she was a dynamic force. She was not only a disturber but an awakener. Her exhilarating differences invigorated the old forms while affecting the new techniques. Her pioneering energy cleared the field of flabby accumulations and helped establish the fresh and free-searching poetry of our day.

LOUIS UNTERMAYER

THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
Amy Lowell



A DOME OF MANY- COLOURED GLASS

LYRICAL POEMS

BEFORE THE ALTAR

Before the Altar, bowed, he stands
With empty hands;
Upon it perfumed offerings burn
Wreathing with smoke the sacrificial urn.
Not one of all these has he given,
No flame of his has leapt to Heaven
Firesouled, vermillion-hearted,
Forked, and darted,
Consuming what a few spare pence
Have cheaply bought, to fling from hence
In idly-asked petition.

His sole condition
Love and poverty.
And while the moon
Swings slow across the sky,
Athwart a waving pine tree,
And so on
Tips all the needles there
With silver sparkles, bitterly
He gazes, while his soul
Grows hard with thinking of the poor-
ness of his dole.

"Shining and distant Goddess, hear my
prayer
Where you swim in the high air!
With charity look down on me,
Under this tree.
Tending the gifts I have not brought,
The rare and goodly things
I have not sought.
Instead, take from me all my life!

"Upon the wings
Of shimmering moonbeams
I pack my poet's dreams
For you.
My wearying strife,
My courage, my loss,
Into the night I toss

For you.
Golden Divinity,
Deign to look down on me
Who so unworthily
Offers to you:
All life has known.
Seeds withered unsovn,
Hopes turning quick to fears,
Laughter which dies in tears.
The shredded remnant of a man
Is all the span
And compass of my offering to you.

"Empty and silent, I
Kneel before your pure, calm majesty.
On this stone, in this urn
I pour my heart and watch it burn,
Myself the sacrifice; but be
Still unmoved: Divinity."

From the altar, bathed in moonlight,
The smoke rose straight in the quiet
night.

SUGGESTED BY THE COVER OF A VOLUME OF KEATS'S POEMS

Wild little bird, who chose thee for a
sign
To put upon the cover of this book?
Who heard thee singing in the distance
dim,
The vague, far greenness of the en-
shrouding wood,
When the damp freshness of the morn-
ing earth
Was full of pungent sweetness and thy
song?

Who followed over moss and twisted
roots,
And pushed through the wet leaves of
trailing vines

Where slanting sunbeams gleamed uncertainly,
While ever clearer came the dropping notes,
Until, at last, two widening trunks disclosed
Thee singing on a spray of branching beech,
Hidden, then seen; and always that same song
Of joyful sweetness, rapture incarnate,
Filled the hushed, rustling stillness of the wood?

We do not know what bird thou art.
Perhaps
That fairy bird, fabled in island tale,
Who never sings but once, and then his song
Is of such fearful beauty that he dies
From sheer exuberance of melody.

For this they took thee, little bird, for this
They captured thee, tilting among the leaves,
And stamped thee for a symbol on this book.
For it contains a song surpassing thine,
Richer, more sweet, more poignant. And the poet
Who felt this burning beauty, and whose heart
Was full of loveliest things, sang all he knew
A little while, and then he died; too frail
To hear this untamed, passionate burst of song.

APPLES OF HESPERIDES

Glinting golden through the trees,
Apples of Hesperides!
Through the moon-pierced warp of night
Shoot pale shafts of yellow light,
Swaying to the kissing breeze
Swings the treasure, golden-gleaming,
Apples of Hesperides!

Far and lofty yet they glimmer,
Apples of Hesperides!
Blinded by their radiant shimmer,
Pushing forward just for these;
Dew-besprinkled, bramble-marred,
Poor duped mortal, travel-scarred,

Always thinking soon to seize
And possess the golden-glistening
Apples of Hesperides!

Orbed, and glittering, and pendent,
Apples of Hesperides!
Not one missing, still transcendent,
Clustering like a swarm of bees.
Yielding to no man's desire,
Glowing with a saffron fire,
Splendid, unassailed, the golden
Apples of Hesperides!

AZURE AND GOLD

April had covered the hills
With flickering yellows and reds,
The sparkle and coolness of snow
Was blown from the mountain beds.

Across a deep-sunken stream
The pink of blossoming trees,
And from windless appleblooms
The humming of many bees.

The air was of rose and gold
Arabesqued with the song of birds
Who, swinging unseen under leaves,
Made music more eager than words.

Of a sudden, aslant the road,
A brightness to dazzle and stun,
A glint of the bluest blue,
A flash from a sapphire sun.

Blue-birds so blue, 'twas a dream,
An impossible, unconceived hue,
The high sky of summer dropped down
Some rapturous ocean to woo.

Such a colour, such infinite light!
The heart of a fabulous gem,
Many-faceted, brilliant and rare.
Centre Stone of the earth's diadem!

Centre Stone of the Crown of the World,
"Sincerity" graved on your youth!
And your eyes hold the blue-bird flash,
The sapphire shaft, which is truth.

~ PETALS

Life is a stream
On which we strew

Petal by petal the flower of our heart;
The end lost in dream,
They float past our view,
We only watch their glad, early start.

Frighted with hope,
Crimsoned with joy,
We scatter the leaves of our opening rose;
Their widening scope,
Their distant employ,
We shall never know. And the stream
as it flows
Sweeps them away,
Each one is gone
Ever beyond into infinite ways.
We alone stay
While years hurry on,
The flower fared forth, though its frag-
rance still stays.

VENETIAN GLASS

As one who sails upon wide, blue sea
Far out of sight of land, his mind intent
Upon the sailing of his little boat,
On tightening ropes and shaping fair his
course,
Hears suddenly, across the restless sea,
The rhythmic striking of some towercd
clock,
And wakes from thoughtless idleness to
time:
Time, the slow pulse which beats eternity!
So through the vacancy of busy life
At intervals you cross my path and bring
The deep solemnity of passing years.
For you I have shed bitter tears, for you
I have relinquished that for which my
heart
Cried out in selfish longing. And to-night
Having just left you, I can say: "Tis
well.
Thank God that I have known a soul
so true,
So nobly just, so worthy to be loved!"

FATIGUE

Stupefy my heart to every day's mo-
notony,
Seal up my eyes, I would not look
so far,
Chasten my steps to peaceful regularity,
Bow down my head lest I behold a
star.

Fill my days with work, a thousand calm
necessities
Leaving no moment to consecrate to
hope,
Girdle my thoughts within the dull cir-
cumferences
Of facts which form the actual in one
short hour's scope.

Give me dreamless sleep, and loose night's
power over me,
Shut my ears to sounds only tumul-
tuous then,
Bid Fancy slumber, and steal away its
potency,
Or Nature wakes and strives to live
again.

Let each day pass, well ordered in its
usefulness,
Unlit by sunshine, unscarred by storm;
Dower me with strength and curb all
foolish eagerness —
The law exacts obedience. Instruct, I
will conform.

A JAPANESE WOOD-CARVING

High up above the open, welcoming door
It hangs, a piece of wood with colours
dim.
Once, long ago, it was a waving tree
And knew the sun and shadow through
the leaves
Of forest trees, in a thick eastern wood.
The winter snows had bent its branches
down,
The spring had swelled its buds with
coming flowers,
Summer had run like fire through its
veins,
While autumn pelted it with chestnut
burrs,
And strewed the leafy ground with acorn
cups.
Dark midnight storms had roared and
crashed among
Its branches, breaking here and there a
limb;
But every now and then broad sunlit
days
Lovingly lingered, caught among the
leaves.
Yes, it had known all this, and yet to us
It does not speak of mossy forest ways,

Of whispering pine trees or the shimmering birch;
But of quick winds, and the salt, stinging sea!

An artist once, with patient, careful knife,
Had fashioned it like to the untamed sea.
Here waves uprear themselves, their tops blown back

By the gay, sunny wind, which whips the blue
And breaks it into gleams and sparks of light.

Among the flashing waves are two white birds

Which swoop, and soar, and scream for very joy

At the wild sport. Now diving quickly in,
Questing some glistening fish. Now flying up,

Their dripping feathers shining in the sun,
While the wet drops like little glints of light,

'all pattering backward to the parent sea.
Sliding along the green and foam-flecked hollows,

Or skimming some white crest about to break,

The spirits of the sky deigning to stoop
And play with ocean in a summer mood.
Anging above the high, wide open door,

Brings to us in quiet, firelit room,
The freedom of the earth's vast solitudes,
Here heaping, sunny waves tumble and roll,

And seabirds scream in wanton happiness.

A LITTLE SONG

Then you, my Dear, are away, away,
Now wearily goes the creeping day.
The year drags after morning, and night
Brings another year of candle light.

Pausing Sun and Lingering Moon!
Faint me, I beg of you, this boon.

Whirl round the earth as never sun
His diurnal journey run.

And, Moon, slip past the ladders of air
In a single flash, while your streaming hair

Touches the stars and pulls them down
To shine on some slumbering Chinese
Own.

O Kindly Sun! Understanding Moon!
Bring evening to crowd the footsteps of noon.

But when that long awaited day
Hangs ripe in the heavens, your voyaging stay.

Be morning, O Sun! with the lark in song,
Be afternoon for ages long.

And, Moon, let you and your lesser lights
Watch over a century of nights.

BEHIND A WALL

I own a solace shut within my heart,
A garden full of many a quaint delight
And warm with drowsy, popped sunshine; bright,

Flaming with lilies out of whose cups dart
Shining things
With powdered wings.

Here terrace sings to terrace, arbors close
The ends of dreaming paths; a wanton wind

Jostles the half-ripe pears, and then,
Unkind,

Tumbles a-slumber in a pillar rose,
With content
Grown indolent.

By night my garden is o'erhung with gems

Fixed in an onyx setting. Fireflies
Flicker their lanterns in my dazzled eyes.

In serried rows I guess the straight, stiff stems

Of hollyhocks
Against the rocks.

So far and still it is that, listening,
I hear the flowers talking in the dawn;
And where a sunken basin cuts the lawn,

Cinctured with iris, pale and glistening,
The sudden swish
Of a waking fish.

A WINTER RIDE

Who shall declare the joy of running!
Who shall tell of the pleasures of flight!

Springing and spurning the tufts of wild
 heather,
 Sweeping, wide-winged, through the
 blue dome of light.
 Everything mortal has moments im-
 mortal,
 Swift and God-gifted, immeasurably
 bright.

So with the stretch of the white road
 before me,
 Shining snowcrystals rainbowed by the
 sun,
 Fields that are white, stained with long,
 cool, blue shadows,
 Strong with the strength of my horse
 as we run.
 Joy in the touch of the wind and the
 sunlight!
 Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one.

A COLOURED PRINT BY SHOKEI

It winds along the face of a cliff
 This path which I long to explore,
 And over it dashes a waterfall,
 And the air is full of the roar
 And the thunderous voice of waters
 which sweep
 In a silver torrent over some steep.

It clears the path with a mighty bound
 And tumbles below and away,
 And the trees and the bushes which grow
 in the rocks
 Are wet with its jewelled spray;
 The air is misty and heavy with sound,
 And small, wet wildflowers star the
 ground.

Oh! The dampness is very good to smell,
 And the path is soft to tread,
 And beyond the fall it winds up and on,
 While little streamlets thread
 Their own meandering way down the hill
 Each singing its own little song, until

I forget that 'tis only a pictured path,
 And I hear the water and wind,
 And look through the mist, and strain
 my eyes
 To see what there is behind;
 For it must lead to a happy land,
 This little path by a waterfall spanned.

SONG

Oh! To be a flower
 Nodding in the sun,
 Bending, then upspringing
 As the breezes run;
 Holding up
 A scent-brimmed cup,
 Full of summer's fragrance to the sum-
 mer sun.

Oh! To be a butterfly
 Still, upon a flower,
 Winking with its painted wings,
 Happy in the hour.
 Blossoms hold
 Mines of gold
 Deep within the farthest heart of each
 chalice flower.

Oh! To be a cloud
 Blowing through the blue,
 Shadowing the mountains,
 Rushing loudly through
 Valleys deep
 Where torments keep
 Always their plunging thunder and
 their misty arch of blue.

Oh! To be a wave
 Splintering on the sand,
 Drawing back, but leaving
 Lingeringly the land.
 Rainbow light
 Flashes bright
 Telling tales of coral caves half hid
 in yellow sand.

Soon they die, the flowers;
 Insects live a day;
 Clouds dissolve in showers;
 Only waves at play
 Last forever.
 Shall endeavor
 Make a sea of purpose mightier than
 we dream to-day?

THE FOOL ERRANT

The Fool Errant sat by the highway of
 life
 And his gaze wandered up and his
 gaze wandered down,
 A vigorous youth, but with no wish to
 walk,
 Yet his longing was great for the dis-
 tant town.

He whistled a little frivolous tune
Which he felt to be pulsing with
ecstasy,
For he thought that success always fol-
lowed desire,
Such a very superlative fool was he.

A maiden came by on an ambling mule,
Her gown was rose-red and her ker-
chief blue,
On her lap she carried a basket of eggs.
'Thought the fool, "There is certainly
room for two."

So he jauntily swaggered towards the
maid
And put out his hand to the bridle-
rein.
'My pretty girl," quoth the fool, "take
me up,
For to ride with you to the town I am
fain."

But the maiden struck at his upraised arm
And pelted him hotly with eggs, a
score.
The mule, lashed into a fury, ran;
The fool went back to his stone and
swore.

Then out of the cloud of settling dust
The burly form of an abbot appeared,
Leading his office he rode to the town.
And the fool got up, for his heart was
cheered.

He stood in the midst of the long, white
road
And swept off his cap till it touched
the ground.
Ah, Reverent Sir, well met," said the
fool,
"A worthier transport never was found.

I pray you allow me to mount with you,
Your palfrey seems both sturdy and
young."
The abbot looked up from the holy book
And cried out in anger, "Hold your
tongue!

How dare you obstruct the King's high-
road,
You saucy varlet, get out of my way."

Then he gave the fool a cut with his
whip
And leaving him smarting, he rode
away.

The fool was angry, the fool was sore,
And he cursed the folly of monks and
maids.
"If I could but meet with a man," sighed
the fool,
"For a woman fears, and a friar up-
braids."

Then he saw a flashing of distant steel
And the clanking of harness greeted
his ears,
And up the road journeyed knights-at-
arms,
With waving plumes and glittering
spears.

The fool took notice and slowly arose,
Not quite so sure was his foolish heart.
If priests and women would none of him
Was it likely a knight would take his
part?

They sang as they rode, these lusty boys,
When one chanced to turn toward the
highway's side,
"There's a sorry figure of fun," jested he,
"Well, Sirrah! move back, there is
scarce room to ride."

"Good Sirs, Kind Sirs," begged the crest-
fallen fool,
"I pray of your courtesy speech with
you,
I'm for yonder town, and have no horse
to ride,
Have you never a charger will carry
two?"

Then the company halted and laughed
out loud.
"Was such a request ever made to a
knight?"
"And where are your legs," asked one,
"if you start,
You may be inside the town gates to-
night."

"'Tis a lazy fellow, let him alone,
They've no room in the town for such
idlers as he."

But one bent from his saddle and said,
 "My man,
 Art thou not ashamed to beg charity!
 "Thou are well set up, and thy legs are
 strong,
 But it much misgives me lest thou'rt
 a fool;
 For beggars get only a beggar's crust,
 Wise men are reared in a different
 school."

Then they clattered away in the dust and
 the wind,
 And the fool slunk back to his lonely
 stone;
 He began to see that the man who asks
 Must likewise give and not ask alone.

Purple tree-shadows crept over the road,
 The level sun flung an orange light,
 And the fool laid his head on the hard,
 gray stone
 And wept as he realized advancing
 night.

A great, round moon rose over a hill
 And the steady wind blew yet more
 cool;
 And crouched on a stone a wayfarer
 sobbed,
 For at last he knew he was only a
 fool.

THE GREEN BOWL

This little bowl is like a mossy pool
 In a Spring wood, where dogtooth vio-
 lets grow
 Nodding in chequered sunshine of the
 trees;
 A quiet place, still, with the sound of
 birds,
 Where, though unseen, is heard the end-
 less song
 And murmur of the never resting sea.
 'Twas winter, Roger, when you made this
 cup,
 But coming Spring guided your eager
 hand
 And round the edge you fashioned young
 green leaves,
 A proper chalice made to hold the shy
 And little flowers of the woods. And
 here

They will forget their sad uprooting, lost
 In pleasure that this circle of bright
 leaves
 Should be their setting; once more they
 will dream
 They hear winds wandering through lofty
 trees
 And see the sun smiling between the
 leaves.

HORA STELLATRIX

The stars hang thick in the apple tree,
 The south wind smells of the pungent
 sea,
 Gold tulip cups are heavy with dew.
 The night's for you, Sweetheart, for you!
 Starfire rains from the vaulted blue.

Listen! The dancing of unseen leaves.
 A drowsy swallow stirs in the eaves.
 Only a maiden is sorrowing.
 'Tis night and spring, Sweetheart, and
 spring!
 Starfire lights your heart's blossoming.

In the intimate dark there's never an
 ear,
 Though the tulips stand on tiptoe to
 hear.
 So give; ripe fruit must shrivel or fall.
 As you are mine, Sweetheart, give all!
 Starfire sparkles, your coronal.

FRAGMENT

What is poetry? Is it a mosaic
 Of coloured stones which curiously
 are wrought
 Into a pattern? Rather glass that's
 taught
 By patient labour any hue to take
 And glowing with a sumptuous splendor,
 make
 Beauty a thing of awe; where sun-
 beams caught,
 Transmuted fall in sheafs of rainbows

Softly the birch trees rustle
Plunging over us branches wide.

Softly the moon glints and glistens
As the water takes and leaves,
Like golden ears of corn
Which fall from loose-bound sheaves,

Or like the snow-white petals
Which drop from an overblown rose,
When Summer ripens to Autumn
And the freighted year must close.

From the shore come the scents of a
garden,
And between a gap in the trees
A proud, white statue glimmers
In cold, disdainful ease.

The child of a southern people,
The thought of an alien race,
What does she in this pale, northern
garden,
How reconcile it with her grace?

But the moon in her wayward beauty
Is ever and always the same,
As lovely as when upon Latmos
She watched till Endymion came.

Through the water the moon writes her
legends
In light, on the smooth, wet sand;
They endure for a moment, and vanish,
And no one may understand.

All round us the secret of Nature
Is telling itself to our sight,
We may guess at her meaning but never
Can know the full mystery of night.

But her power of enchantment is on us,
We bow to the spell which she weaves,
Made up of the murmur of waves
And the manifold whisper of leaves.

SUMMER

Some men there are who find in nature
all
Their inspiration, hers the sympathy
Which spurs them on to any great en-
deavor,
To them the fields and woods are closest
friends,

And they hold dear communion with
the hills;
The voice of waters soothes them with
its fall,
And the great winds bring healing in their
sound.

To them a city is a prison house
Where pent up human forces labour
and strive,
Where beauty dwells not, driven forth
by man;
But where in winter they must live until
Summer gives back the spaces of the
hills.

To me it is not so. I love the earth
And all the gifts of her so lavish hand:
Sunshine and flowers, rivers and rushing
winds,

Thick branches swaying in a winter
storm,
And moonlight playing in a boat's wide
wake;

But more than these, and much, ah,
how much more,
I love the very human heart of man.
Above me spreads the hot, blue mid-
day sky,

Far down the hillside lies the sleeping
lake

Lazily reflecting back the sun,
And scarcely ruffled by the little breeze
Which wanders idly through the nod-
ding ferns.

The blue crest of the distant mountain,
tops

The green crest of the hill on which I
sit;

And it is summer, glorious, deep-toned
summer,

The very crown of nature's changing year
When all her surging life is at its full.
To me alone it is a time of pause,
A void and silent space between two
worlds,

When inspiration lags, and feeling sleeps,
Gathering strength for efforts yet to
come.

For life alone is creator of life,
And closest contact with the human
world

Is like a lantern shining in the night
To light me to a knowledge of myself.
I love the vivid life of winter months
In constant intercourse with human
minds,

When every new experience is gain
 And on all sides we feel the great world's
 heart;
 The pulse and throb of life which makes
 us men!

"TO-MORROW TO FRESH WOODS AND PASTURES NEW"

As for a moment he stands, in hardy
 masculine beauty,
 Poised on the firecrested rock, over the
 pool which below him
 Gleams in the wavering sunlight, waiting
 the shock of his plunging.
 So for a moment I stand, my feet planted
 firm in the present,
 Eagerly scanning the future which is so
 soon to possess me.

THE WAY

At first a mere thread of a footpath half
 blotted out by the grasses
 Sweeping triumphant across it, it wound
 between hedges of roses
 Whose blossoms were poised above leaves
 as pond lilies float on the water,
 While hidden by bloom in a hawthorn a
 bird filled the morning with singing.

It widened a highway, majestic, stretch-
 ing ever to distant horizons,
 Where shadows of tree-branches wavered,
 vague outlines invaded by sunshine;
 No sound but the wind as it whispered
 the secrets of earth to the flowers,
 And the hum of the yellow bees, honey-
 laden and dusty with pollen.
 And Summer said, "Come, follow on-
 ward, with no thought save the long-
 ing to wander,
 The wind, and the bees, and the flowers,
 all singing the great song of Nature,
 Are minstrels of change and of promise,
 they herald the joy of the Future."

Later the solitude vanished, confused and
 distracted the road
 Where many were seeking and jostling.
 Left behind were the trees and the
 flowers.
 The half-realized beauty of quiet, the
 sacred unconscious communing.

And now he is come to a river, a line of
 gray, sullen water,
 Not blue and splashing, but dark, rolling
 somberly on to the ocean.

But on the far side is a city whose win-
 dows flame gold in the sunset.
 It lies fair and shining before him, a gem
 set betwixt sky and water.
 And spanning the river a bridge, frail
 promise to longing desire,
 Flung by man in his infinite courage,
 across the stern force of the water;
 And he looks at the river and fears, the
 bridge is so slight, yet he ventures
 His life to its fragile keeping, if it fails
 the waves will engulf him.
 O Arches! be strong to uphold him, and
 bear him across to the city,
 The beautiful city whose spires still glow
 with the fires of sunset!

ΔΙΨΑ

Look, Dear, how bright the moonlight is
 to-night!
 See where it casts the shadow of that tree
 Far out upon the grass. And every gust
 Of light night wind comes laden with the
 scent
 Of opening flowers which never bloom
 by day:
 Night-scented stocks, and four o'clocks,
 and that
 Pale yellow disk, upreared on its tall
 stalk,
 The evening primrose, comrade of the
 stars.
 It seems as though the garden which
 you love
 Were like a swinging censer, its incense
 Floating before us as a reverent act
 To sanctify and bless our night of love.
 Tell me once more you love me, that 'tis
 you
 Yes, really you, I touch, so, with my hand;
 And tell me it is by your own free will
 That you are here, and that you like to be
 just here, with me, under this sailing
 pine.
 I need to hear it often for my heart
 Doubts naturally, and finds it hard to
 trust.
 Ah, Dearest, you are good to love me so,

And yet I would not have it goodness,
rather

Excess of selfishness in you to need
Me through and through, as flowers need
the sun.

I wonder can it really be that you
And I are here alone, and that the night
Is full of hours, and all the world asleep,
And none can call to you to come away;
For you have given all yourself to me
Making me gentle by your willingness.
Has your life too been waiting for this

time,
Not only mine the sharpness of this joy?
Dear Heart, I love you, worship you as
though

I were a priest before a holy shrine.
I'm glad that you are beautiful, although
Were you not lovely still I needs must
love;

But you are all things, it must have been
so

For otherwise it were not you. Come,
close;

When you are in the circle of my arm
Faith grows a mountain and I take my
stand

Upon its utmost top. Yes, yes, once more
Kiss me, and let me feel you very near
Wanting me wholly, even as I want you.
Have years behind been dark? Will those
to come

Bring unguessed sorrows into our two
lives?

What does it matter, we have had to-
night!

To-night will make us strong, for we
believe

Each in the other, this is a sacrament.
Beloved, is it true?

ROADS

I know a country laced with roads,

They join the hills and they span the
brooks,

They weave like a shuttle between broad
fields,

And slide discreetly through hidden
nooks.

They are canopied like a Persian dome
And carpeted with orient dyes.

They are myriad-voiced, and musical,
And scented with happiest memories.

O Winding roads that I know so well,

Every twist and turn, every hollow and
hill!

They are set in my heart to a pulsing tune
Gay as a honey-bee humming in June.

'Tis the rhythmic beat of a horse's feet
And the pattering paws of a sheep-dog
bitch;

'Tis the creaking trees, and the singing
breeze,

And the rustle of leaves in the road-side
ditch.

A cow in a meadow shakes her bell

And the notes cut sharp through the
autumn air,

Each chattering brook bears a fleet of
leaves

Their cargo the rainbow, and just now
where

The sun splashed bright on the road
ahead

A startled rabbit quivered and fled.

O Uphill roads and roads that dip
down!

You curl your sun-spattered length along,
And your march is beaten into a song

By the softly ringing hoofs of a horse
And the panting breath of the dogs I

love.

The pageant of Autumn follows its course
And the blue sky of Autumn laughs

above.

And the song and the country become as
one,

I see it as music, I hear it as light;

Prismatic and shimmering, trembling to
tone,

The land of desire, my soul's delight.

And always it beats in my listening ears
With the gentle thud of a horse's

stride,

With the swift-falling steps of many dogs,
Following, following at my side.

O Roads that journey to fairyland!

Radiant highways whose vistas gleam,
Leading me on, under crimson leaves,

To the opaline gates of the Castles of
Dream.

TEATRO BAMBINO

DUBLIN, N.H.

How still it is! Sunshine itself here falls
In quiet shafts of light through the

high trees

Which, arching, make a roof above the
 walls
 Changing from sun to shadow as each
 breeze
 Lingers a moment, charmed by the
 strange sight
 Of an Italian theatre, storied, seer
 Of vague romance, and time's long his-
 tory,
 Where tiers of grass grown seats sprinkled
 with white,
 Sweet scented clover, form a broken
 sphere
 Grouped round the stage in hushed
 expectancy

What sound is that which echoes through
 the wood?
 Is it the reedy note of an oaten pipe?
 Perchance a minute more will see the
 brood
 Of the shaggy forest god, and on his
 lip
 Will rest the rushes he is wont to play
 His train in woven baskets bear ripe
 fruit
 And weave a dance with ropes of gray
 acorns,
 So light their touch the grasses scarcely
 sway
 As they the measure tread to the lilting
 flute
 Alas! 'tis only Fancy thus adorns

A cloud drifts idly over the shining sun
 How damp it seems, how silent, still,
 and strange!
 Surely 'twas here some tragedy was done,
 And here the chorus sang each coming
 change?
 Sure this is deep in some sweet, southern
 wood,
 These are not pines, but cypress tall
 and dark,
 That is no thrush which sings so
 rapturously,
 But the nightingale in his most passionate
 mood
 Bursting his little heart with anguish
 Hark!
 The tread of sandalled feet comes
 noiselessly.

The silence almost is a sound, and dreams
 Take on the semblances of finite
 things,

So potent is the spell that what but seems
 Elsewhere, is lifted here on Fancy's
 wings
 The little woodland theatre seems to
 wait,
 All tremulous with hope and wistful
 joy,
 For something that is sure to come at
 last,
 Some deep emotion, satisfying, great
 It grows a living presence, bold and
 shy,
 Cradling the future in a glorious past.

THE ROAD TO AVIGNON

A minstrel stands on a marble stair,
 Blown by the bright wind, debonaire;
 Below lies the sea, a sapphire floor,
 Above on the terrace a turret door
 Frames a lady, listless and wan,
 But fain for the eye to rest upon
 The minstrel plucks at his silver strings,
 And looking up to the lady, sings —
 Down the road to Avignon,
 The long, long road to Avignon,
 Across the bridge to Avignon,
 One morning in the spring

The octagon tower casts a shade
 Cool and gray like a cutlass blade,
 In sun baked vines the cicadas spin,
 The little green lizards run out and in
 A sail dips over the ocean's rim,
 And bubbles rise to the fountain's brim
 The minstrel touches his silver strings,
 And gazing up to the lady, sings —
 Down the road to Avignon,
 The long, long road to Avignon,
 Across the bridge to Avignon,
 One morning in the spring.

Slowly she walks to the balustrade,
 Idly notes how the blossoms fade
 In the sun's caress, then crosses where
 The shadow shelters a carved chair.
 Within its curve, supreme she lies,
 And wearily closes her tired eyes
 The minstrel beseeches his silver strings,
 And holding the lady spellbound,
 sings —
 Down the road to Avignon,
 The long, long road to Avignon,
 Across the bridge to Avignon,
 One morning in the spring.

Clouds sail over the distant trees,
 Petals are shaken down by the breeze;
 They fall on the terrace tiles like snow;
 The sighing of waves sounds, far below.
 A humming-bird kisses the lips of a rose
 Then laden with honey and love he goes.
 The minstrel woos with his silver strings,
 And climbing up to the lady, sings: —
 Down the road to Avignon,
 The long, long road to Avignon,
 Across the bridge to Avignon,
 One morning in the spring.

Step by step, and he comes to her,
 Fearful lest she suddenly stir.
 Sunshine and silence, and each to each,
 The lute and his singing their only speech;
 He leans above her, her eyes unclose,
 The humming-bird enters another rose.
 The minstrel hushes his silver strings.
 Hark! The beating of humming-birds'
 wings!

Down the road to Avignon,
 The long, long road to Avignon,
 Across the bridge to Avignon,
 One morning in the spring.

NEW YORK AT NIGHT

A near horizon whose sharp jags
 Cut brutally into a sky
 Of leaden heaviness, and crags
 Of houses lift their masonry
 Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie
 And snort, outlined against the gray
 Of lowhung cloud. I hear the sigh
 The goaded city gives, not day
 Nor night can ease her heart, her an-
 guished labours stay.

Below, straight streets, monotonous,
 From north and south, from east and
 west,
 Stretch glittering; and luminous
 Above, one tower tops the rest
 And holds aloft man's constant quest:
 Time! Joyless emblem of the greed
 Of millions, robber of the best
 Which earth can give, the vulgar creed
 Has seared upon the night its flaming
 ruthless screech.

O Night! Whose soothing presence
 brings

The quiet shining of the stars.

O Night! Whose cloak of darkness clings

So intimately close that scars
 Are hid from our own eyes. Beggars
 By day, our wealth is having night
 To burn our souls before altars
 Dim and tree-shadowed, where the light
 Is shed from a young moon, mysteriously
 bright.

Where art thou hiding, where thy peace?
 This is the hour, but thou are not.
 Will waking tumult never cease?
 Hast thou thy votary forgot?
 Nature forsakes this man-begot
 And festered wilderness, and now
 The long still hours are here, no jot
 Of dear communing do I know;
 Instead the glaring, man-filled city groans
 below!

A FAIRY TALE

On winter nights beside the nursery fire
 We read the fairy tale, while glowing
 coals
 BUILT its pictures. There before our
 eyes
 We saw the vaulted hall of traceried stone
 Uprear itself, the distant ceiling hung
 With pendent stalactites like frozen
 vines;
 And all along the walls at intervals,
 Curled upwards into pillars, roses climbed,
 And ramped and were confined, and
 clustered leaves
 Divided where there peered a laughing
 face.
 The foliage seemed to rustle in the wind,
 A silent murmur, carved in still, gray
 stone.
 High pointed windows pierced the south-
 ern wall
 Whence proud escutcheons flung pris-
 matic fires
 To stain the tessellated marble floor
 With pools of red, and quivering green,
 and blue;
 And in the shade beyond the further door,
 Its sober squares of black and white were
 hid
 Beneath a restless, shuffling, wide-eyed
 mob
 Of lackeys and retainers come to view
 The Christening.
 A sudden blare of trumpets, and the
 throng
 About the entrance parted as the guests

Filed singly in with rare and precious gifts.

Our eager fancies noted all they brought,
The glorious unattainable delights!
But always there was one unbidden guest
Who cursed the child and left it bitterness.

The fire falls asunder, all is changed,
I am no more a child, and what I see
Is not a fairy tale, but life, my life.
The gifts are there, the many pleasant things:

Health, wealth, long-settled friendships,
with a name
Which honors all who bear it, and the power

Of making words obedient. This is much;
But overshadowing all is still the curse,
'That never shall I be fulfilled by love!
Along the parching highroad of the world
No other soul shall bear mine company.
Always shall I be teased with semblances,
With cruel impostures, which I trust
awhile

Then dash to piccecs, as a careless boy
Flings a kaleidoscope, which shattering
Strews all the ground about with coloured sherds.

So I behold my visions on the ground
No longer radiant, an ignoble heap
Of broken, dusty glass. And so, unlit,
Even by hope or faith, my dragging steps
Force me forever through the passing days.

CROWNED

You came to me bearing bright roses,
Red like the wine of your heart;
You twisted them into a garland
To set me aside from the mart.
Red roses to crown me your lover,
And I walked aureoled and apart.

Enslaved and encircled, I bore it,
Proud token of my gift to you.
The petals waned paler, and shriveled,
And dropped; and the thorns started
through.

Bitter thorns to proclaim me your lover,
A diadem woven with rue.

TO

ELIZABETH WARD PERKINS

Dear Bessie, would my tired rhyme
Had force to rise from apathy,

And shaking off its lethargy
Ring word-tones like a Christmas chime.

But in my soul's high belfry, chill
The bitter wind of doubt has blown,
The summer swallows all have flown,
The bells are frost-bound, mute and still.

Upon the crumbling boards the snow
Has drifted deep, the clappers hang
Prismed with icicles, their clang
Unheard since ages long ago.

The rope I pull is stiff and cold,
My straining ears detect no sound
Except a sigh, as round and round
The wind rocks through the timbers old.

Below, I know the church is bright
With halocd tapers, warm with prayer;
But here I only feel the air
Of icy centuries of night.

Beneath my feet the snow is lit
And gemmed with colours, red, and
blue,
Topaz, and green, where light falls
through
The saints that in the windows sit.

Here darkness seems a spectred thing,
Voiceless and haunting, while the stars
Mock with a light of long dead years
The ache of present suffering.

Silent and winter-killed I stand,
No carol hymns my debt to you;
But take this frozen thought in lieu,
And thaw its music in your hand.

THE PROMISE OF THE MORNING STAR

Thou father of the children of my brain
By thee engendered in my willing heart,
How can I thank thee for this gift of
art
Poured out so lavishly, and not in vain.

What thou created never more can die,
Thy fructifying power lives in me
And I conceive, knowing it is by thee,
Dear other parent of my poetry!

For I was but a shadow with a name,
Perhaps by now the very name's forgot;

So strange is Fate that it has been my
lot
To learn from thee the presence of
that aim

Which evermore must guide me. All
unknown,

By me unguessed, by thee not even
dreamed,

A tree has blossomed in a night that
seemed

Of stubborn, barren wood. For thou hast
sown

This seed of beauty in a ground of truth.

Humbly I dedicate myself, and yet

I tremble with a sudden fear to set
New music ringing through my fading
youth.

J—K. HUYSMANS

A flickering glimmer through a window-
pane,

A dim red glare through mud bespattered
glass,

Cleaving a path between blown walls of
sleet

Across uneven pavements sunk in slime
To scatter and then quench itself in mist.
And struggling, slipping, often rudely
hurled

Against the jutting angle of a wall,
And cursed, and reeled against, and flung
aside

By drunken brawlers as they shuffled past,
A man was groping to what seemed a
light.

His eyelids burnt and quivered with the
strain

Of looking, and against his temples beat
The all enshrouding, suffocating dark.

He stumbled, lurched, and struck against
a door

That opened, and a howl of obscene mirth
Grated his senses, wallowing on the floor
Lay men, and dogs and women in the dirt.
He sickened, loathing it, and as he gazed
The candle guttered, flared, and then
went out

Through travail of ignoble midnight
streets

He came at last to shelter in a porch
Where gothic saints and warriors made a
shield

To cover him, and tortured gargoyles spat
One long continuous stream of silver rain
That clattered down from myriad roofs
and spires

Into a darkness, loud with rushing sound
Of water falling, gurgling as it fell,
But always thickly dark. Then as he
leaned

Unconscious where, the great oak door
blew back

And cast him, bruised and dripping, in
the church.

His eyes from long sojourning in the night
Were blinded now as by some glorious
sun;

He slowly crawled toward the altar steps.

He could not think, for heavy in his ears

An organ boomed majestic harmonies;

He only knew that what he saw was light!

He bowed himself before a cross of flame
And shut his eyes in fear lest it should
fade.

MARCH EVENING

Blue through the window burns the twi-
light;

Heavy, through trees, blows the warm
south wind.

Glistering, against the chill, gray sky light,
Wet, black branches are barred and
entwined.

Sodden and spongy, the scarce-green grass
plot

Dents into pools where a foot has been.

Puddles lie spilt in the road a mass, not
Of water, but steel, with its cold, hard
sheen.

Faint fades the fire on the hearth, its
embers

Scattering wide at a stronger gust.

Above, the old weathercock groans, but
remembers

Creaking, to turn, in its centuried rust.

Dying, forlorn, in dreary sorrow,

Wrapping the mists round her wither-
ing form.

Day sinks down; and in darkness to-
morrow

Travails to birth in the womb of the
storm.

SONNETS

LEISURE

Leisure, thou goddess of a bygone age,
 When hours were long and days sufficed
 to hold
 Wide-eyed delights and pleasures un-
 controlled
 By shortening moments, when no gaunt
 presage
 Of undone duties, modern heritage,
 Haunted our happy minds; must thou
 withhold
 Thy presence from this over-busy world,
 And bearing silence with thee disengage
 Our twined fortunes? Deeps of unhewn
 woods
 Alone can cherish thee, alone possess
 Thy quiet, teeming vigor. This our crime:
 Not to have worshipped, marred by
 alien moods
 That sole condition of all loveliness,
 The dreaming lapse of slow, unmeasured
 time.

ON CARPACCIO'S PICTURE
THE DREAM OF ST. URSULA

Swept, clean, and still, across the polished
 floor
 From some unshuttered casement, hid
 from sight,
 The level sunshine slants, its greater
 light
 Quenching the little lamp which pallid,
 poor,
 Flickering, un replenished, at the door
 Has striven against darkness the long
 night.
 Dawn fills the room, and penetrating,
 bright,
 The silent sunbeams through the window
 pour.
 And she lies sleeping, ignorant of Fate,
 Enmeshed in listless dreams, her soul
 not yet
 Ripened to bear the purport of this day.
 The morning breeze scarce stirs the
 coverlet,
 A shadow falls across the sunlight;
 wait!
 A lark is singing as he flies away.

THE MATRIX

Coated and harassed in the factory
 That tears our life up into bits of days
 Ticked off upon a clock which never
 stays,
 Shredding our portion of Eternity,
 We break away at last, and steal the key
 Which hides a world empty of hours;
 ways
 Of space unroll, and Heaven overlays
 The leafy, sun-lit earth of Fantasy.
 Beyond the ilex shadow glares the sun,
 Scorching against the blue flame of the
 sky.
 Brown lily-pads lie heavy and supine
 Within a granite basin, under one
 The bronze-gold glimmer of a carp;
 and I
 Reach out my hand and pluck a nec-
 tarine.

MONADNOCK IN EARLY SPRING

Cloud-topped and splendid, dominating
 all
 The little lesser hills which compass
 thee,
 Thou standest, bright with April's
 buoyancy,
 Yet holding Winter in some shaded wall
 Of stern, steep rock; and startled by the
 call
 Of Spring, thy trees flush with expect-
 tancy
 And cast a cloud of crimson, silently,
 Above thy snowy crevices where fall
 Pale shrivelled oak leaves, while the
 snow beneath
 Melts at their phantom touch. Another
 year
 Is quick with import. Such each year has
 been.
 Unmoved thou watchest all, and all
 bequeath
 Some jewel to thy diadem of power,
 Thou pledge of greater majesty unseen.

THE LITTLE GARDEN

A little garden on a bleak hillside
 Where deep the heavy, dazzling moun-
 tain snow

Lies far into the spring The sun's pale glow
 Is scarcely able to melt patches wide
 About the single rose bush All denied
 Of nature's tender ministrics But
 no,—
 For wonder working faith has made it
 blow
 With flowers many lined and starry eyed
 Here sleeps the sun long, idle summer
 hours,
 Here butterflies and bees fare far to rove
 Amid the crumpled leaves of poppy
 flowers,
 Here four o'clocks, to the passionate night
 above
 Fling whiffs of perfume, like pale in-
 cense showers
 A little garden, loved with a great love!

TO AN EARLY DAFFODIL

Thou yellow trumpeter of laggard Spring!
 Thou herald of rich Summer's myriad
 flowers!
 The climbing sun with new recovered
 powers
 Does warm thee into being, through the
 ring
 Of rich, brown earth he woos thee, makes
 thee fling
 Thy green shoots up, inhenting the
 dowers
 Of bending sky and sudden, sweeping
 showers,
 Till ripe and blossoming thou art a thing
 To make all nature glad, thou art so
 gay,
 To fill the lonely with a joy untold,
 Nodding at every gust of wind to day,
 To-morrow jewelled with raindrops All
 ways bold
 To stand erect, full in the dazzling play
 Of April's sun, for thou hast caught his
 gold

LISTENING

"Tis you that are the music, not your
 song
 The song is but a door which, opening
 wide,
 Lets forth the pent up melody inside,
 Your spirit's harmony, which clear and
 strong

Sings but of you Throughout your whole
 life long
 Your songs, your thoughts, your domgs,
 each divide
 This perfect beauty, waves within a tide
 Or single notes amid a glorious throng
 The song of earth has many different
 chords,
 Ocean has many moods and many tones
 Yet always ocean In the damp Spring
 woods
 The painted trillium smiles, while crisp
 pine cones
 Autumn alone can open So is this
 One music with a thousand cadences

THE LAMP OF LIFE

Always we are following a light,
 Always the light recedes, with groping
 hands
 We stretch toward this glory, while the
 lands
 We journey through are hidden from our
 sight
 Dim and mysterious, folded deep in night,
 We care not, all our utmost need de-
 mands
 Is but the light, the light! So still it
 stands
 Surely our own if we exert our might
 Fool! Never can'st thou grasp this fleet
 ing gleam,
 Its glowing flame would die if it were
 caught,
 Its value is that it doth always seem
 But just a little farther on Distraught,
 But lighted ever onward, we are
 brought
 Upon our way unknowing, in a dream

HERO-WORSHIP

A face seen passing in a crowded street,
 A voice heard singing music, large and
 free,
 And from that moment life is changed,
 and we
 Become of more heroic temper, meet
 To freely ask and give, a man complete
 Radiant because of faith, we dare to be
 What Nature meant us Brave idolatry
 Which can conceive a hero! No deceit,
 No knowledge taught by untelenting
 years,

Can quench this fierce, untamable desire
 We know that what we long for once achieved
 Will cease to satisfy Be still our fears,
 If what we worship fail us, still the fire
 Burns on, and it is much to have believed

IN DARKNESS ✓

Must all of worth be travailed for, and those
 Life's brightest stars rise from a troubled sea?
 Must years go by in sad uncertainty
 Leaving us doubting whose the conquering blows,
 Are we or Fate the victors? Time which shows
 All inner meanings will reveal, but we
 Shall never know the upshot Ours to be
 Wasted with longing, shattered in the throes,
 The agonies of splendid dreams, which day
 Dims from our vision, but each night brings back,
 We strive to hold their grandeur, and essay
 To be the thing we dream Sudden we lack
 The flash of insight, life grows drear and gray,
 And hour follows hour, nerveless, slack

BEFORE DAWN

Life! Austere arbiter of each man's fate,
 By whom he learns that Nature's steadfast laws
 Are as decrees immutable, O pause
 Your even forward march! Not yet too late
 Teach me the needed lesson, when to wait
 Inactive as a ship when no wind draws
 To stretch the loosened cordage One implores
 Thy clemency, whose willfulness innate
 Has gone uncurbed and roughshod while the years
 Have lengthened into decades, now distressed

He knows no rule by which to move or stay,
 And teased with restlessness and desperate fears
 He dares not watch in silence thy wise way
 Bringing about results none could have guessed

THE POET ✓

What instinct forces man to journey on,
 Urged by a longing blind but dominant!
 Nothing he sees can hold him, nothing daunt
 His never failing eagerness The sun
 Setting in splendour every night has won
 His vassalage, those towers flamboyant
 Of airy cloudland palaces now haunt
 His daylight wanderings Forever done
 With simple joys and quiet happiness
 He guards the vision of the sunset sky,
 Though faint with weariness he must possess
 Some fragment of the sunset's majesty,
 He spurns life's human friendships to profess
 Life's loneliness of dreaming ecstasy

AT NIGHT

The wind is singing through the trees to-night,
 A deep voiced song of rushing cadences
 And crashing intervals No summer breeze
 Is this, though hot July is at its height,
 Gone is her gentler music, with delight
 She listens to this booming like the seas,
 These elemental, loud necessities
 Which call to her to answer their swift might
 Above the tossing trees shines down a star,
 Quietly bright, this wild, tumultuous joy
 Quickens nor dims its splendour And my mind,
 O Star! is filled with your white light, from far,
 So suffer me this one night to enjoy
 The freedom of the onward sweeping wind

THE FRUIT GARDEN PATH

The path runs straight between the flowering rows,
 A moonlit path, hemmed in by beds of bloom,
 Where phlox and mangolds dispute for room
 With tall, red dahlias and the briar rose
 'Tis reckless prodigality which throws
 Into the night these wafts of rich perfume
 Which sweep across the garden like a plume
 Over the trees a single bright star glows
 Dear garden of my childhood, here my years
 Have run away like little grains of sand,
 The moments of my life, its hopes and fears
 Have all found utterance here, where now I stand,
 My eyes ache with the weight of unshed tears,
 You are my home, do you not understand?

MIRAGE

How is it that, being gone, you fill my days,
 And all the long nights are made glad by thee?
 No loneliness is this, nor misery,
 But great content that these should be the ways
 Whereby the Fancy, dreaming as she strays,
 Makes bright and present what she would would be
 And who shall say if the reality
 Is not with dreams so pregnant For delays
 And hindrances may bar the wished for end,
 A thousand misconceptions may prevent
 Our souls from coming near enough to blend,
 Let me but think we have the same intent,
 That each one needs to call the other, "friend!"
 It may be vain illusion. I'm content

TO A FRIEND

I ask but one thing of you, only one,
 That always you will be my dream of you;

That never shall I wake to find untrue
 All this I have believed and rested on,
 Forever vanished, like a vision gone
 Out into the night Alas, how few
 There are who strike in us a chord we knew
 Existed, but so seldom heard its tone
 We tremble at the half-forgotten sound
 The world is full of rude awakenings
 And heaven born castles shattered to the ground,
 Yet still our human longing vainly clings
 To a belief in beauty through all wrongs
 O stay your hand, and leave my heart its songs!

A FIXED IDEA

What torture lurks within a single thought
 When grown too constant, and however kind,
 However welcome still, the weary mind
 Aches with its presence. Dull remembrance taught
 Remembers on unceasingly; unsought
 The old delight is with us but to find
 That all recurring joy is pain refined,
 Become a habit, and we struggle, caught
 You lie upon my heart as on a nest,
 Folded in peace, for you can never know
 How crushed I am with having you at rest
 Heavy upon my life I love you so
 You bind my freedom from its rightful quest
 In mercy lift your drooping wings and go.

DREAMS

I do not care to talk to you although
 Your speech evokes a thousand sympathies,
 And all my being's silent harmonies
 Wake trembling into music. When you go
 It is as if some sudden, dreadful blow
 Had severed all the strings with savage ease
 No, do not talk, but let us rather seize
 This intimate gift of silence which we know.
 Others may guess your thoughts from what you say,

As storms are guessed from clouds where
darkness broods.

To me the very essence of the day
Reveals its inner purpose and its moods;
As poplars feel the rain and then
straightway
Reverse their leaves and shimmer through
the woods.

FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

My heart is tuned to sorrow, and the
strings
Vibrate most readily to minor chords,
Searching and sad; my mind is stuffed
with words
Which voice the passion and the ache of
things:
Illusions beating with their baffled wings
Against the walls of circumstance, and
hoards
Of torn desires, broken joys; records
Of all a bruised life's maimed imaginings.
Now you are come! You tremble like
a star
Poised where, behind earth's rim, the sun
has set,
Your voice has sung across my heart, but
numb
And mute, I have no tones to answer.
Far
Within I kneel before you, speechless yet,
And life ablaze with beauty, I am dumb.

FROM ONE WHO STAYS

How empty seems the town now you are
gone!
A wilderness of sad streets, where gaunt
walls
Hide nothing to desire; sunshine falls
Eery, distorted, as it long had shone
On white, dead faces tombed in halls of
stone.
The whir of motors, stricken through
with calls
Of playing boys, floats up at intervals;
But all these noises blur to one long moan.
What quest is worth pursuing? And
how strange
That other men still go accustomed ways!
I hate their interest in the things they do.
A spectre-horde repeating without
change

An old routine. Alone I know the days
Are still-born, and the world stopped,
lacking you.

CREPUSCULE DU MATIN

All night I wrestled with a memory
Which knocked insurgent at the gates
of thought.
The crumbled wreck of years behind
has wrought
Its disillusion; now I only cry
For peace, for power to forget the lie
Which hope too long has whispered.
So I sought
The sleep which would not come, and
night was fraught
With old emotions weeping silently.
I heard your voice again, and knew the
things
Which you had promised proved an
empty vaunt.
I felt your clinging hands while night's
broad wings
Cherished our love in darkness. From
the lawn
A sudden, quivering birdnote, like a
taunt.
My arms held nothing but the empty
dawn.

AFTERMATH

I learnt to write to you in happier
days,
And every letter was a piece I chipped
From off my heart, a fragment newly
clipped
From the mosaic of life; its blues and
grays,
Its throbbing reds, I gave to earn your
praise.
To make a pavement for your feet I
stripped
My soul for you to walk upon, and
slipped
Beneath your steps to soften all your
ways.
But now my letters are like blossoms
pale
We strew upon a grave with hopeless
tears.
I ask no recompense, I shall not fail

Although you do not heed; the long, sad
years

Still pass, and still I scatter flowers frail,
And whisper words of love which no one
hears.

THE END

Throughout the echoing chambers of my
brain

I hear your words in mournful cadence
toll

Like some slow passing-bell which
warns the soul

Of sundering darkness. Unrelenting, fain
To batter down resistance, fall again

Stroke after stroke, insistent diastole,
The bitter blows of truth, until the
whole

Is hammered into fact made strangely
plain.

Where shall I look for comfort? Not
to you.

Our worlds are drawn apart, our spirit's
suns

Divided, and the light of mine burnt dim.
Now in the haunted twilight I must do

Your will. I grasp the cup which over-
runs,

And with my trembling lips I touch the
rim.

THE STARLING

"'I can't get out,' said the starling."

STERNE'S *Sentimental Journey*

Forever the impenetrable wall

Of self confines my poor rebellious soul,
I never see the towering white clouds
roll

Before a sturdy wind, save through the
small

Barred window of my jail. I live a thrall
With all my outer life a clipped, square
hole,

Rectangular; a fraction of a scroll
Unwound and winding like a worsted
ball.

My thoughts are grown uneager and
depressed

Through being always mine, my fancy's
wings

Are moulted and the feathers blown away.
I weary for desires never guessed,

For alien passions, strange imaginings,
To be some other person for a day.

MARKET DAY

White, glittering sunlight fills the market
square,

Spotted and sprigged with shadows.
Double rows

Of bartering booths spread out their
tempting shows

Of globed and golden fruit, the morning
air

Smells sweet with ripeness, on the pave-
ment there

A wicker basket gapes and overflows
Spilling out cool, blue plums. The
market glows,

And flaunts, and clatters in its busy care.
A stately minster at the northern side

Lifts its twin spires to the distant sky,
Pinnaced, carved and buttressed;

through the wide
Arched doorway peals an organ, sud-
denly —

Crashing, triumphant in its pregnant
tide,

Quenching the square in vibrant har-
mony.

EPITAPH IN A CHURCH-YARD IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

GEORGE AUGUSTUS CLOUGH

A NATIVE OF LIVERPOOL,

DIED SUDDENLY OF "STRANGER'S FEVER"
Nov'r 5th 1843

AGED 22

He died of "Stranger's Fever" when his
youth

Had scarcely melted into manhood, so
The chiselled legend runs; a brother's
woe

Laid bare for epitaph. The savage ruth
Of a sunny, bright, but alien land, un-
couth

With cruel caressing dealt a mortal
blow,

And by this summer sea where flowers
grow

In tropic splendour, witness to the truth
Of ineradicable race he lies.

The law of duty urged that he should
roam,

Should sail from fog and chilly airs to
 skies
 Clear with deceitful welcome. He had
 come
 With proud resolve, but still his lonely
 eyes
 Ached with fatigue at never seeing
 home.

FRANCIS II, KING OF NAPLES

WRITTEN AFTER READING TREVELYAN'S
 "GARIBALDI AND THE MAKING OF ITALY"

Poor foolish monarch, vacillating, vain,
 Decaying victim of a race of kings,
 Swift Destiny shook out her purple
 wings
 And caught him in their shadow; not
 again
 Could furtive plotting smear another
 stain
 Across his tarnished honour. Smoulder-
 ings
 Of sacrificial fires burst their rings
 And blotted out in smoke his lost domain.
 Bereft of courtiers, only with his queen,
 From empty palace down to empty
 quay.
 No challenge screamed from hostile cara-
 bine.

A single vessel waited, shadowy;
 All night she ploughed her solitary way
 Beneath the stars, and through a tranquil
 sea.

TO JOHN KEATS

Great master! Boyish, sympathetic man!
 Whose orb'd and ripened genius
 lightly lung
 From life's slim, twisted tendril and
 there swung
 In crimson-sphered completeness; guard-
 ian
 Of crystal portals through whose open-
 ings fan
 The spiced winds which blew when
 earth was young,
 Scattering wreaths of stars, as Jove
 once flung
 A golden shower from heights cerulean.
 Crumbled before thy majesty we bow.
 Forget thy empurpled state, thy
 panoply
 Of greatness, and be merciful and near;
 A youth who trudged the highroad we
 tread now
 Singing the miles behind him; so may
 we
 Faint throbblings of thy music overhear.

THE BOSTON ATHENAEUM

THE BOSTON ATHENAEUM

Thou dear and well-loved haunt of happy
 hours,
 How often in some distant gallery,
 Gained by a little painful spiral stair,
 Far from the halls and corridors where
 throng
 The crowd of casual readers, have I
 passed
 Long, peaceful hours seated on the floor
 Of some retired nook, all lined with
 books,
 Where reverie and quiet reign supreme!
 Above, below, on every side, high shelved
 From careless grasp of transient interest,
 Stand books we can but dimly see, their
 charm
 Much greater than their titles are unread;

While on a level with the dusty floor
 Others are ranged in orderly confusion,
 And we must stoop in painful posture
 while
 We read their names and learn their his-
 tories.
 The little gallery winds round about
 The middle of a most secluded room,
 Midway between the ceiling and the
 floor.
 A type of those high thoughts, which
 while we read
 Hover between the earth and furthest
 heaven
 As fancy wills, leaving the printed page;
 For books but give the theme, our hearts
 the rest,
 Enriching simple words with unguessed
 harmony

And overtones of thought we only know
 And as we sit long hours quietly,
 Reading at times, and at times simply
 dreaming,
 The very room itself becomes a friend,
 The confidant of intimate hopes and
 fears,
 A place where are engendered pleasant
 thoughts,
 And possibilities before unguessed
 Come to fruition born of sympathy
 And as in some gay garden stretched upon
 A genial southern slope, warmed by the
 sun,
 The flowers give their fragrance joyously
 To the caressing touch of the hot noon,
 So books give up the all of what they
 mean
 Only in a congenial atmosphere,
 Only when touched by reverent hands,
 and read
 By those who love and feel as well as
 think
 For books are more than books, they are
 the life,
 The very heart and core of ages past
 The reason why men lived, and worked,
 and died,
 The essence and quintessence of their
 lives
 And we may know them better, and
 divine
 The inner motives whence their actions
 sprang,
 Far better than the men who only knew
 Their bodily presence, the soul forever
 hid
 From those with no ability to see
 They wait here quietly for us to come
 And find them out, and know them for
 our friends,
 These men who toiled and wrote only for
 this,
 To leave behind such modicum of truth
 As each perceived and each alone could
 tell
 Silently waiting that from time to time
 It may be given them to illuminate
 Dull daily facts with pristine radiance
 For some long waited for affinity
 Who lingers yet in the deep womb of
 time
 The shifting sun pierces the young green
 leaves
 Of elm trees, newly coming into bud,

And splashes on the floor and on the
 books
 Through old, high, rounded windows,
 dim with age
 The noisy city sounds of modern life
 Float softened to us across the old grave
 yard
 The room is filled with a warm, mellow
 light,
 No garish colours jar on our content,
 The books upon the shelves are old and
 worn
 'Twas no belated effort nor attempt
 To keep abreast with old as well as new
 That placed them here, tricked in a
 modern guise
 Easily got, and held in light esteem
 Our fathers fathers, slowly and carefully
 Gathered them, one by one, when they
 were new
 And a delighted world received their
 thoughts
 Hungry, while we but love the more,
 Because they are so old and grown so
 dear!
 The backs of tarnished gold, the faded
 boards,
 The slightly yellowing page, the strange
 old type,
 All speak the fashion of another age,
 The thoughts peculiar to the man who
 wrote
 Arrayed in garb peculiar to the time,
 As though the idiom of a man were
 caught
 Imprisoned in the idiom of a race
 A nothing truly, yet a link that binds
 All ages to their own inheritance,
 And stretching backward, dim and dim
 mer still,
 Is lost in a remote antiquity
 Grapes do not come of thorns nor figs of
 thistles,
 And even a great poet's divinest thought
 Is coloured by the world he knows and
 sees
 The little intimate things of every day,
 The trivial nothings that we think not of,
 These go to make a part of each man's
 life,
 As much a part as do the larger thoughts
 He takes account of Nay, the little things
 Of daily life it is which mold, and shape,
 And make him apt for noble deeds and
 true

And as we read some much-loved master-piece,
Read it as long ago the author read,
With eyes that brimmed with tears as he
saw

The message he believed stamped in type
Inviolable for the slow-coming years;
We know a certain subtle sympathy,
We seem to clasp his hand across the
past,

His words become related to the time,
He is at one with his own glorious creed
And all that in his world was dared and
done.

The long, still, fruitful hours slip away
Shedding their influences as they pass;
We know ourselves the richer to have sat
Upon this dusty floor and dreamed our
dreams.

No other place to us were quite the same,
No other dreams so potent in their charm,
For this is ours! Every twist and turn
Of every narrow stair is known and loved;
Each nook and cranny is our very own;
The dear, old, sleepy place is full of
spells

For us, by right of long inheritance.
The building simply bodies forth a
thought

Peculiarly inherent to the race.
And we, descendants of that elder time,
Have learnt to love the very form in
which

The thought has been embodied to our
years.

And here we feel that we are not alone,
We too are one with our own richest past;
And here that veiled, but ever smouldering
fire

Of race, which rarely seen yet never dies,
Springs up afresh and warms us with its
heat.

And must they take away this treasure
house,

To us so full of thoughts and memories;
To all the world beside a dismal place
Lacking in all this modern age requires
To tempt along the unfamiliar paths
And leafy lanes of old time literatures?

It takes some time for moss and vines to
grow

And warmly cover gaunt and chill stone
walls

Of stately buildings from the cold North
Wind.

The lichen of affection takes as long,
Or longer, ere it lovingly enfolds

A place which since without it were be-
reft,

All stript and bare, shorn of its chiefest
grace.

For what to us were halls and corridors
However large and fitting, if we part
With this which is our birthright; if we
lose

A sentiment profound, unsoundable,
Which Time's slow ripening alone can
make,

And man's blind foolishness so quickly
mar.

VERSES FOR CHILDREN

SEA SHELL

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing me a song, O Please!
A song of ships, and sailor men,
And parrots, and tropical trees,

Of islands lost in the Spanish Main
Which no man ever may find again,
Of fishes and corals under the waves,
And seahorses stabled in great green caves.

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing of the things you know so well.

FRINGED GENTIAN

Near where I live there is a lake
As blue as blue can be, winds make
It dance as they go blowing by.
I think it curtsies to the sky.

It's just a lake of lovely flowers
And my Mamma says they are ours;
But they are not like those we grow
To be our very own, you know.

We have a splendid garden, there
Are lots of flowers everywhere;

Roses, and pinks, and four o'clocks
And hollyhocks, and evening stocks.

Mamma lets us pick them, but never
Must we pick any gentians — ever!
For if we carried them away.
They'd die of homesickness that day.

THE PAINTED CEILING

My Grandpapa lives in a wonderful house
With a great many windows and doors,
There are stairs that go up, and stairs
that go down,
And such beautiful, slippery floors.

But of all of the rooms, even mother's
and mine,
And the bookroom, and parlour and all,
I like the green dining-room so much the
best
Because of its ceiling and wall.

Right over your head is a funny round
hole
With apples and pears falling through;
There's a big bunch of grapes all purple
and sweet,
And melons and pineapples too.

They tumble and tumble, but never come
down
Though I've stood underneath a long
while
With my mouth open wide, for I always
have hoped
Just a cherry would drop from the pile.

No matter how early I run there to look
It has always begun to fall through;
And one night when at bedtime I crept
in to see,
It was falling by candle-light too.

I am sure they are magical fruits, and each
one
Makes you hear things, or see things,
or go
Forever invisible; but it's no use,
And of course I shall just never know.

For the ladder's too heavy to lift, and
the chairs
Are not nearly so tall as I need.
I've given up hope, and I feel I shall die
Without having accomplished the deed.

It's a little bit sad, when you seem very
near

To adventures and things of that sort,
Which nearly begin, and then don't; and
you know

It is only because you are short.

THE CRESCENT MOON

Slipping softly through the sky
Little horned, happy moon,
Can you hear me up so high?
Will you come down soon?

On my nursery window-sill
Will you stay your steady flight?
And then float away with me
Through the summer night?

Brushing over tops of trees,
Playing hide and seek with stars,
Peeping up through shiny clouds
At Jupiter or Mars.

I shall fill my lap with roses
Gathered in the Milky Way,
All to carry home to mother.
Oh! what will she say!

Little rocking, sailing moon,
Do you hear me shout — Ahoy!
Just a little nearer, moon,
To please a little boy.

CLIMBING

High up in the apple tree climbing I go,
With the sky above me, the earth below.
Each branch is the step of a wonderful
stair
Which leads to the town I see shining up
there.

Climbing, climbing, higher and higher,
The branches blow and I see a spire,
The gleam of a turret, the glint of a dome,
All sparkling and bright, like white sea
foam.

On and on, from bough to bough,
The leaves are thick, but I push my way
through;
Before, I have always had to stop,
But to-day I am sure I shall reach the top.

To-day to the end of the marvelous stair,
Where those glittering pinnacles flash in
the air!
Climbing, climbing, higher I go,
With the sky close above me, the earth
far below.

THE TROUT

Naughty little speckled trout,
Can't I coax you to come out?
Is it such great fun to play
in the water every day?

Do you pull the Naiads' hair
Hiding in the lilies there?
Do you hunt for fishes' eggs,
Or watch tadpoles grow their legs?

Do you little trouts have school
In some deep sun-glinted pool,
And in recess play at tag
Round that bed of purple flag?

I have tried so hard to catch you,
Hours and hours I've sat to watch you;
But you never will come out,
Naughty little speckled trout!

WIND

He shouts in the sails of the ships at sea,
He steals the down from the honeybee,
He makes the forest trees rustle and sing,
He twirls my kite till it breaks its string.
Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,
North, South, East and West,
Each is the wind I like the best.

He calls up the fog and hides the hills,
He whirls the wings of the great wind-
mills,
The weathercocks love him and turn to
discover
His whereabouts — but he's gone, the
rover!

Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,
North, South, East and West,
Each is the wind I like the best.

The pine trees toss him their cones with
glee,

The flowers bend low in courtesy,
Each wave flings up a shower of pearls,
The flag in front of the school unfurls.

Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,
North, South, East and West,
Each is the wind I like the best.

THE PLEIADES

By day you cannot see the sky
For it is up so very high.
You look and look, but it's so blue
That you can never see right through.

But when night comes it is quite plain,
And all the stars are there again.
They seem just like old friends to me,
I've known them all my life you see.

There is the dipper first, and there
Is Cassiopeia in her chair,
Orion's belt, the Milky Way,
And lots I know but cannot say.

One group looks like a swarm of bees,
Papa says they're the Pleiades;
But I think they must be the toy
Of some nice little angel boy.

Perhaps his jackstones which to-day
He has forgot to put away,
And left them lying on the sky
Where he will find them bye and bye

I wish he'd come and play with me.
We'd have such fun, for it would be
A most unusual thing for boys
To feel that they had stars for toys!

SWORD BLADES AND POPPY SEED

SWORD BLADES AND POPPY SEED

A drifting, April, twilight sky,
A wind which blew the puddles dry,
And slapped the river into waves
That ran and hid among the staves
Of an old wharf. A watery light
Touched bleak the granite bridge, and
white

Without the slightest tinge of gold,
The city shivered in the cold.
All day my thoughts had lain as dead,
Unborn and bursting in my head.
From time to time I wrote a word
Which lines and circles overscored.
My table seemed a graveyard, full
Of coffins waiting burial.

I seized these vile abortions, tore
Them into jagged bits, and swore
To be the dupe of hope no more.
Into the evening straight I went,
Starved of a day's accomplishment.
Unnoticing, I wandered where
The city gave a space for air,
And on the bridge's parapet
I leant, while pallidly there set
A dim, discouraged, worn-out sun.
Behind me, where the tramways run,
Blossomed bright lights, I turned to leave,
When someone plucked me by the sleeve.

"Your pardon, Sir, but I should be
Most grateful could you lend to me
A carfare, I have lost my purse."
The voice was clear, concise, and terse.
I turned and met the quiet gaze
Of strange eyes flashing through the haze.
The man was old and slightly bent,
Under his cloak some instrument
Disarranged its stately line,
He rested on his cane a fine
And nervous hand, an almandine
Smouldered with dull-red flames, sanguine
It burned in twisted gold, upon
His finger. Like some Spanish don,
Conferring favours even when
Asking an alms, he bowed again

And waited. But my pockets proved
Empty, in vain I poked and shoved,
No hidden penny lurking there
Greeted my search. "Sir, I declare
I have no money, pray forgive,
But let me take you where you live."
And so we plodded through the mire
Where street lamps cast a wavering fire.
I took no note of where we went,
His talk became the element
Wherein my being swam, content.
It flashed like rapiers in the night
Lit by uncertain candle-light,
When on some moon-forsaken sward
A quarrel dies upon a sword.
It hacked and carved like a cutlass blade,
And the noise in the air the broad words
made

Was the cry of the wind at a window-pane
On an Autumn night of sobbing rain.
Then it would run like a steady stream
Under pinnaced bridges where minarets
gleam,

Or lap the air like the lapping tide
Where a marble staircase lifts its wide
Green-spotted steps to a garden gate,
And a waning moon is sinking straight
Down to a black and ominous sea,
While a nightingale sings in a lemon tree.
I walked as though some opiate
Had stung and dulled my brain, a state
Acute and slumbrous. It grew late.
We stopped, a house stood silent, dark.
The old man scratched a match, the spark
Lit up the keyhole of a door,
We entered straight upon a floor
White with finest powdered sand
Carefully sifted, one might stand
Muddy and dripping, and yet no trace
Would stain the boards of this kitchen-
place.

From the chimney, red eyes sparked the
gloom,
And a cricket's chirp filled all the room.
My host threw pine-cones on the fire
And crimson and scarlet glowed the pyre

Wrapped in the golden flame's desire.
The chamber opened like an eye,
As a half-melted cloud in a Summer sky
The soul of the house stood guessed, and shy

It peered at the stranger warily.
A little shop with its various ware
Spread on shelves with nicest care.
Pitchers, and jars, and jugs, and pots,
Pipkins, and mugs, and many lots
Of lacquered canisters, black and gold,
Like those in which Chinese tea is sold.
Chests, and puncheons, kegs, and flasks,
Goblets, chalices, firkins, and casks.
In a corner three ancient amphorae leaned
Against the wall, like ships careened.
There was dusky blue of Wedgwood ware,
The carved, white figures fluttering there
Like leaves adrift upon the air.
Classic in touch, but emasculate,
The Greek soul grown effeminate.
The factory of Sèvres had lent
Elegant boxes with ornament
Culled from gardens where fountains
splashed

And golden carp in the shadows flashed,
Nuzzling for crumbs under lily-pads,
Which ladies threw as the last of fads.
Eggshell trays where gay beaux knelt,
Hand on heart, and daintily spelt
Their love in flowers, brittle and bright,
Artificial and fragile, which told aright
The vows of an eighteenth-century knight.
The cruder tones of old Dutch jugs
Glared from one shelf, where Toby mugs
Endlessly drank the foaming ale,
Its froth grown dusty, awaiting sale.
The glancing light of the burning wood
Played over a group of jars which stood
On a distant shelf, it seemed the sky
Had lent the half-tones of his blazonry
To paint these porcelains with unknown
lues

Of reds dyed purple and greens turned
blues,
Of lustres with so evanescent a sheen
Their colours are felt, but never seen.
Strange winged dragons writhe about
These vases, poisoned venoms spout,
Impregnate with old Chinese charms;
Sealed urns containing mortal harms,
They fill the mind with thoughts impure,
Pestilent drippings from the ure
Of vicious things. "Ah, I see,"
Said I, "you deal in pottery."

The old man turned and looked at me.
Shook his head gently. "No," said he.

Then from under his cloak he took the
thing

Which I had wondered to see him bring
Guarded so carefully from sight.
As he laid it down it flashed in the light,
A Toledo blade, with basket hilt,
Damascened with arabesques of gilt,
Or rather gold, and tempered so
It could cut a floating thread at a blow.
The old man smiled, "It has no sheath,
'Twas a little careless to have it beneath
My cloak, for a jostle to my arm
Would have resulted in serious harm.
But it was so fine, I could not wait,
So I brought it with me despite its state."
"An amateur of arms," I thought,
"Bringing home a prize which he has
bought."

"You care for this sort of thing, Dear Sir?"
"Not in the way which you infer.
I need them in business, that is all."
And he pointed his finger at the wall.
Then I saw what I had not noticed before.
The walls were hung with at least five
score

Of swords and daggers of every size
Which nations of militant men could de-
vise.

Poisoned spears from tropic seas,
That natives, under banana trees,
Snear with the juice of some deadly
snake.

Blood-dipped arrows, which savages make
And tip with feathers, orange and green,
A quivering death, in harlequin sheen.

High up, a fan of glancing steel
Was formed of claymores in a wheel.
Jewelled swords worn at kings' levees
Were suspended next midshipmen's dirks,
and these

Elbowed stilettoes come from Spain,
Chased with some splendid Hidalgo's
name.

There were Samurai swords from old
Japan,

And scimitars from Hindoostan,
While the blade of a Turkish yataghan
Made a waving streak of vitreous white
Upon the wall, in the firelight.

Foils with buttons broken or lost
Lay heaped on a chair, among them tossed
The boarding-pike of a privateer.

Against the chimney leaned a queer
 Two-handed weapon, with edges dull
 As though from hacking on a skull.
 The rusted blood corroded it still.
 My host took up a paper spill
 From a heap which lay in an earthen
 bowl,
 And lighted it at a burning coal.
 At either end of the table, tall
 Wax candles were placed, each in a small,
 And slim, and burnished candlestick
 Of pewter. The old man lit each wick,
 And the room leapt more obviously
 Upon my mind, and I could see
 What the flickering fire had hid from me.
 Above the chimney's yawning throat,
 Shoulder high, like the dark wainscote,
 Was a mantelshelf of polished oak
 Blackened with the pungent smoke
 Of firelit nights; a Cromwell clock
 Of tarnished brass stood like a rock
 In the midst of a heaving, turbulent sea
 Of every sort of cutlery.
 There lay knives sharpened to any use,
 The keenest lancet, and the obtuse
 And blunted pruning bill-hook; blades
 Of razors, scalpels, shears; cascades
 Of penknives, with handles of mother-of-
 pearl,
 And scythes, and sickles, and scissors; a
 whirl
 Of points and edges, and underneath
 Shot the gleam of a saw with bristling
 teeth.
 My head grew dizzy, I seemed to hear
 A battle-cry from somewhere near,
 The clash of arms, and the squeal of
 balls,
 And the echoless thud when a dead man
 falls.
 A smoky cloud had veiled the room,
 Shot through with lurid glares; the gloom
 Pounded with shouts and dying groans,
 With the drip of blood on cold, hard
 stones.
 Sabres and lances in streaks of light
 Gleamed through the smoke, and at my
 right
 A creese, like a licking serpent's tongue,
 Glittered an instant, while it stung.
 Streams, and points, and lines of fire!
 The livid steel, which man's desire
 Had forged and welded, burned white and
 cold.
 Every blade which man could mould,

Which could cut, or slash, or cleave, or
 rip,
 Or pierce, or thrust, or carve, or strip,
 Or gash, or chop, or puncture, or tear,
 Or slice, or hack, they all were there.
 Nerveless and shaking, round and round,
 I stared at the walls and at the ground,
 Till the room spun like a whipping top,
 And a stern voice in my ear said, "Stop!
 I sell no tools for murderers here.
 Of what are you thinking! Please clear
 Your mind of such imaginings.
 Sit down. I will tell you of these things."

He pushed me into a great chair
 Of russet leather, poked a flare
 Of tumbling flame, with the old long
 sword,
 Up the chimney; but said no word.
 Slowly he walked to a distant shelf,
 And brought back a crock of finest delf.
 He rested a moment a blue-veined hand
 Upon the cover, then cut a band
 Of paper, pasted neatly round,
 Opened and poured. A sliding sound
 Came from beneath his old white hands,
 And I saw a little heap of sands,
 Black and smooth. What could they be:
 "Pepper," I thought. He looked at me.
 "What you see is poppy seed.
 Lethan dreams for those in need."
 He took up the grains with a gentle hand
 And sifted them slowly like hour-glass
 sand.
 On his old white finger the almandine
 Shot out its rays, incarnadine.
 "Visions for those too tired to sleep.
 These seeds cast a film over eyes which
 weep.
 No single soul in the world could dwell,
 Without these poppy-seeds I sell."
 For a moment he played with the shining
 stuff,
 Passing it through his fingers. Enough
 At last, he poured it back into
 The china jar of Holland blue,
 Which he carefully carried to its place.
 Then, with a smile on his aged face,
 He drew up a chair to the open space
 'Twixt table and chimney. "Without
 preface,
 Young man, I will say that what you see
 Is not the puzzle you take it to be."
 "But surely, Sir, there is something
 strange

In a shop with goods at so wide a range
Each from the other, as swords and seeds.
Your neighbours must have greatly differ-
ing needs."

"My neighbours," he said, and he stroked
his chin,

"Live everywhere from here to Pekin.
But you are wrong, my sort of goods
Is but one thing in all its moods."

He took a shagreen letter case
From his pocket, and with charming grace

Offered me a printed card,
I read the legend, "Ephraim Bard.
Dealer in Words." And that was all.

I stared at the letters, whimsical
Indeed, or was it merely a jest.

He answered my unasked request:
"All books are either dreams or swords,
You can cut, or you can drug, with words.

My firm is a very ancient house,
The entries on my books would rouse
Your wonder, perhaps incredulity.

I inherited from an ancestry
Stretching remotely back and far,
This business, and my clients are
As were those of my grandfather's days,
Writers of books, and poems, and plays.
My swords are tempered for every speech,
For fencing wit, or to carve a breach
Through old abuses the world condones.
In another room are my grindstones and
hones,

For whetting razors and putting a point
On daggers, sometimes I even anoint
The blades with a subtle poison, so
A twofold result may follow the blow.

These are purchased by men who feel
The need of stabbing society's heel,
Which egotism has brought them to think
Is set on their necks. I have foils to pink

An adversary to quaint reply,
And I have customers who buy
Scalpels with which to dissect the brains
And hearts of men. Ultramundanes

Even demand some finer kinds
To open their own souls and minds.
But the other half of my business deals
With visions and fancies. Under seals,

Sorted, and placed in vessels here,
I keep the seeds of an atmosphere.

Each jar contains a different kind
Of poppy seed. From farthest Ind
Come the purple flowers, opium filled,
From which the weirdest myths are dis-

tilled;

My orient porcelains contain them all,
Those Lowestoft pitchers against the wall
Hold a lighter kind of bright conceit;
And those old Saxe vases, out of the heat
On that lowest shelf beside the door,
Have a sort of ideal, 'couleur d'or.'

Every castle of the air
Sleeps in the fine black grains, and there
Are seeds for every romance, or light
Whiff of a dream for a summer night.
I supply to every want and taste."

'Twas slowly said, in no great haste
He seemed to push his wares, but I
Dumfounded listened. By and by
A log on the fire broke in two.

He looked up quickly, "Sir, and you?"
I groped for something I should say;
Amazement held me numb. "To-day
You sweated at a fruitless task."

He spoke for me, "What do you ask?
How can I serve you?" "My kind host,
My penniless state was not a boast;
I have no money with me." He smiled.

"Not for that money I beguiled
You here; you paid me in advance."

Again I felt as though a trance
Had dimmed my faculties. Again
He spoke, and this time to explain.

"The money I demand is Life,
Your nervous force, your joy, your strife!"
What infamous proposal now
Was made me with so calm a brow?

Bursting through my lethargy,
Indignantly I hurled the cry:
"Is this a nightmarer, or am I
Drunk with some infernal wine?"

I am no Faust, and what is mine
Is what I call my soul! Old Man!
Devil or Ghost! Your hellish plan
Revolts me. Let me go." "My child,"

And the old tones were very mild,
"I have no wish to barter souls;
My traffic does not ask such toils.

I am no devil; is there one?
Surely the age of fear is gone.

We live within a daylight world
Lit by the sun, where winds unfurled
Sweep clouds to scatter pattering rain,
And then blow back the sun again.

I sell my fancies, or my swords,
To those who care far more for words,
Ideas, of which they are the sign,
Than any other life-design.

Who buy of me must simply pay
Their whole existence quite away:

Their strength, their manhood, and their
prime,
Their hours from morning till the time
When evening comes on tiptoe feet,
And losing life, think it complete;
Must miss what other men count being,
To gain the gift of deeper seeing;
Must spurn all ease, all hindering love,
All which could hold or bind; must prove
The farthest boundaries of thought,
And shun no end which these have
brought;
Then die in satisfaction, knowing
That what was sown was worth the
sowing.

I claim for all the goods I sell
That they will serve their purpose well,
And though you perish, they will live.
Full measure for your pay I give.
To-day you worked, you thought, in vain.
What since has happened is the train
Your toiling brought. I spoke to you
For my share of the bargain, due."
"My life! And is that all you crave
In pay? What even childhood gave!
I have been dedicate from youth.
Before my God I speak the truth!"
Fatigue, excitement of the past
Few hours broke me down at last.
All day I had forgot to eat,
My nerves betrayed me, lacking meat.
I bowed my head and felt the storm
Plough shattering through my prostrate
form.
The tearless sobs tore at my heart.
My host withdrew himself apart;
Busied among his crockery,

He paid no farther heed to me.
Exhausted, spent, I huddled there,
Within the arms of the old carved chair.

A long half-hour dragged away,
And then I heard a kind voice say,
"The day will soon be dawning, when
You must begin to work again.
Here are the things which you require."
By the fading light of the dying fire,
And by the guttering candle's flare,
I saw the old man standing there.
He handed me a packet, tied
With crimson tape, and sealed. "Inside
Are seeds of many differing flowers,
To occupy your utmost powers
Of storied vision, and these swords
Are the finest which my shop affords.
Go home and use them; do not spare
Yourself; let that be all your care.
Whatever you have means to buy
Be very sure I can supply."
He slowly walked to the window, flung
It open, and in the grey air rung
The sound of distant matin bells.
I took my parcels. Then, as tells
An ancient mumbling monk his beads,
I tried to thank for his courteous deeds
My strange old friend. "Nay, do not
talk,"

He urged me, "you have a long walk
Before you. Good-by and Good-day!"
And gently sped upon my way
I stumbled out in the morning hush,
As down the empty street a flush
Ran level from the rising sun.
Another day was just begun.

SWORD BLADES

THE CAPTURED GODDESS

Over the housetops,
Above the rotating chimney-pots,
I have seen a shiver of amethyst,
And blue and cinnamon have flickered
A moment,
At the far end of a dusty street.

Through sheeted rain
Has come a lustre of crimson,
And I have watched moonbeams
Rushed by a film of palest green.

It was her wings,
Goddess!
Who stepped over the clouds,
And laid her rainbow feathers
Aslant on the currents of the air.

I followed her for long,
With gazing eyes and stumbling feet.
I cared not where she led me,
My eyes were full of colours:
Saffrons, rubies, the yellows of beryls,
And the indigo-blue of quartz;
Flights of rose, layers of chrysoprase,

Points of orange, spirals of vermilion,
The spotted gold of tiger-lily petals,
The loud pink of bursting hydrangeas.
I followed,
And watched for the flashing of her wings.

In the city I found her,
The narrow-streeted city.
In the market-place I came upon her,
Bound and trembling.
Her fluted wings were fastened to her
sides with cords,
She was naked and cold,
For that day the wind blew
Without sunshine.

Men chattered for her,
They bargained in silver and gold,
In copper, in wheat,
And called their bids across the market-
place.

The Goddess wept.

Hiding my face I fled,
And the grey wind hissed behind me,
Along the narrow streets.

THE PRECINCT. ROCHESTER

The tall yellow hollyhocks stand,
Still and straight,
With their round blossoms spread open,
In the quiet sunshine.
And still is the old Roman wall,
Rough with jagged bits of flint,
And jutting stones,
Old and craggy,
Quite still in its antiquity.
The pear-trees press their branches against
it,
And feeling it warm and kindly,
The little pears ripen to yellow and red.
They hang heavy, bursting with juice,
Against the wall.
So old, so still!
The sky is still.
The clouds make no sound
As they slide away
Beyond the Cathedral Tower,
To the river,
And the sea.
It is very quiet,
Very sunny.

The myrtle flowers stretch themselves in
the sunshine,
But make no sound.
The roses push their little tendrils up,
And climb higher and higher.
In spots they have climbed over the wall,
But they are very still,
They do not seem to move.
And the old wall carries them
Without effort, and quietly
Ripens and shields the vines and blossoms.

A bird in a plane-tree
Sings a few notes,
Cadenced and perfect
They weave into the silence.
The Cathedral bell knocks,
One, two, three, and again.
And then again.
It is a quiet sound.
Calling to prayer,
Hardly scattering the stillness,
Only making it close in more densely.
The gardener picks ripe gooseberries
For the Dean's supper to-night.
It is very quiet,
Very regulated and mellow.
But the wall is old,
It has known many days.
It is a Roman wall,
Left-over and forgotten.

Beyond the Cathedral Close
Yelp and mutter the discontents of peo-
ple not mellow,
Not well-regulated.
People who care more for bread than for
beauty,
Who would break the tombs of saints,
And give the painted windows of churches
To their children for toys.
People who say:
"They are dead, we live!
The world is for the living."

Fools! It is always the dead who breed.
Crush the ripe fruit, and cast it aside,
Yet its seeds shall fructify,
And trees rise where your huts were stand-
ing.
But the little people are ignorant,
They chaffer, and swarm.
They gnaw like rats,
And the foundations of the Cathedral are
honey-combed.

The Dean is in the Chapter House;
 He is reading the architect's bill
 For the completed restoration of the
 Cathedral.
 He will have ripe gooseberries for supper,
 And then he will walk up and down the
 path
 By the wall,
 And admire the snapdragons and dahlias,
 Thinking how quiet and peaceful
 The garden is.
 The old wall will watch him,
 Very quietly and patiently it will watch.
 For the wall is old,
 It is a Roman wall.

THE CYCLISTS

Spread on the roadway,
 With open-blown jackets,
 Like black, soaring pinions,
 They swoop down the hillside,
 The Cyclists.

Seeming dark-plumaged
 Birds, after carrion,
 Careening and circling,
 Over the dying
 Of England.

She lies with her bosom
 Beneath them, no longer
 The Dominant Mother,
 The Virile — but rotting
 Before time.

The smell of her, tainted,
 Has bitten their nostrils.
 Exultant they hover,
 And shadow the sun with
 Foreboding.

SUNSHINE THROUGH A COBWEBBED WINDOW

What charm is yours, you faded old-world
 tapestries,
 Of outworn, childish mysteries,
 Vague pageants woven on a web of
 dream!
 And we, pushing and fighting in the
 turbid stream
 Of modern life, find solace in your tar-
 nished broderies.

Old lichened halls, sun-shaded by huge
 cedar-trees,
 The laycred branches horizontal stretched,
 like Japanese
 Dark-banded prints. Carven cathedrals,
 on a sky
 Of faintest colour, where the gothic
 spires fly
 And sway like masts, against a shifting
 breeze.

Worm-eaten pages, clasped in old brown
 vellum, shrunk
 From over-handling, by some anxious
 monk.
 Or Virgin's Hours, bright with gold
 and graven
 With flowers, and rare birds, and all
 the Saints of Heaven,
 And Noah's ark stuck on Ararat, when
 all the world had sunk.

They soothe us like a song, heard in a
 garden, sung
 By youthful minstrels, on the moonlight
 flung
 In cadences and falls, to ease a queen,
 Widowed and childless, cowering in a
 screen
 Of myrtles, whose life hangs with all its
 threads unstrung.

A LONDON THOROUGHFARE. 2 A.M.

They have watered the street,
 It shines in the glare of lamps,
 Cold, white lamps,
 And lies
 Like a slow-moving river,
 Barred with silver and black.
 Cabs go down it,
 One,
 And then another,
 Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.
 Tramps doze on the window-ledges,
 Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.
 The city is squalid and sinister,
 With the silver-barred street in the midst,
 Slow-moving,
 A river leading nowhere.
 Opposite my window,
 The moon cuts,
 Clear and round,

Through the plum-coloured night.
 She cannot light the city:
 It is too bright.
 It has white lamps,
 And glitters coldly.

I stand in the window and watch the
 moon.
 She is thin and lustreless,
 But I love her.
 I know the moon,
 And this is an alien city.

ASTIGMATISM

TO EZRA POUND
 WITH MUCH FRIENDSHIP AND
 ADMIRATION AND SOME DIFFERENCES
 OF OPINION

The Poet took his walking-stick
 Of fine and polished ebony.
 Set in the close-grained wood
 Were quaint devices;
 Patterns in ambers,
 And in the clouded green of jades.
 The top was of smooth, yellow ivory,
 And a tassel of tarnished gold
 Hung by a faded cord from a hole
 Pierced in the hard wood,
 Circled with silver.
 For years the Poet had wrought upon this
 cane.

His wealth had gone to enrich it,
 His experiences to pattern it,
 His labour to fashion and burnish it.
 To him it was perfect,
 A work of art and a weapon,
 A delight and a defence.
 The Poet took his walking-stick
 And walked abroad.
 Peace be with you, Brother.

The Poet came to a meadow.
 Sifted through the grass were daisies,
 Open-mouthed, wondering, they gazed at
 the sun.
 The Poet struck them with his cane.
 The little heads flew off, and they lay
 Dying, open-mouthed and wondering,
 On the hard ground.
 "They are useless. They are not roses,"
 said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother. Go your
 ways.

The Poet came to a stream.
 Purple and blue flags waded in the water,
 In among them hopped the speckled
 frogs;
 The wind slid through them, rustling.
 The Poet lifted his cane,
 And the iris heads fell into the water.
 They floated away, torn and drowning.
 "Wretched flowers," said the Poet,
 "They are not roses."

Peace be with you, Brother. It is your
 affair.

The Poet came to a garden.
 Dahlias ripened against a wall,
 Gillyflowers stood up bravely for all their
 short stature,
 And a trumpet-vine covered an arbour
 With the red and gold of its blossoms.
 Red and gold like the brass notes of
 trumpets.
 The Poet knocked off the stiff heads of
 the dahlias,
 And his cane lopped the gillyflowers at
 the ground.
 Then he severed the trumpet-blossoms
 from their stems.
 Red and gold they lay scattered,
 Red and gold, as on a battle field;
 Red and gold, prone and dying.
 "They were not roses," said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother.
 But behind you is destruction, and waste
 places.

The Poet came home at evening,
 And in the candle-light
 He wiped and polished his cane.
 The orange candle flame leaped in the
 yellow ambers,
 And made the jades undulate like green
 pools.
 It played along the bright ebony,
 And glowed in the top of cream-coloured
 ivory.
 But these things were dead,
 Only the candle-light made them seem
 to move.
 "It is a pity there were no roses," said
 the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother. You have
 chosen your part.

THE COAL PICKER

He perches in the slime, inert,
 Bedaubed with iridescent dirt.
 The oil upon the puddles dries
 To colours like a peacock's eyes,
 And half-submerged tomato-cans
 Shine scaly, as leviathans
 Oozily crawling through the mud.
 The ground is here and there bestud
 With lumps of only part-burned coal.
 His duty is to glean the whole,
 To pick them from the filth, each one,
 To hoard them for the hidden sun
 Which glows within each fiery core
 And waits to be made free once more.
 Their sharp and glistening edges cut
 His stiffened fingers. Through the smut
 Glean red the wounds which will not shut.
 Wet through and shivering he kneels
 And digs the slippery coals: like eels
 They slide about. His force all spent,
 He counts his small accomplishment.
 A half-a-dozen clinker-coals
 Which still have fire in their souls.
 Fire! And in his thought there burns
 The topaz fire of votive urns.
 He sees it fling from hill to hill,
 And still consumed, is burning still.
 Higher and higher leaps the flame,
 The smoke an ever-shifting frame.
 He sees a Spanish Castle old,
 With silver steps and paths of gold.
 From myrtle bowers comes the plash
 Of fountains and the emerald flash
 Of parrots in the orange trees,
 Whose blossoms pasture humming bees.
 He knows he feeds the urns whose smoke
 Bears visions, that his master-stroke
 Is out of dirt and misery
 To light the fire of poetry.
 He sees the glory, yet he knows
 That others cannot see his shows.
 To them his smoke is sightless, black,
 His votive vessels but a pack
 Of old discarded shards, his fire
 A peddler's; still to him the pyre
 Is incensed, an enduring goal
 He sighs and grubs another coal.

STORM-RACKED

How should I sing when buffeting salt
 waves
 And stung with bitter surges, in whose
 might

I toss, a cockleshell? The dreadful
 night
 Marshals its undefeated dark and raves
 In brutal madness, reeling over graves
 Of vanquished men, long-sunk on out
 of sight,
 Sent wailing down to glut the ghoulish
 sprite
 Who haunts foul seaweed forests and
 their caves.
 No parting cloud reveals a watery star,
 My cries are washed away upon the wind,
 My cramped and blistering hands can
 find no spar,
 My eyes with hope o'erstrained, are grow-
 ing blind.
 But painted on the sky great visions
 burn,
 My voice, oblation from a shattered
 urn!

CONVALESCENCE

From out the dragging vastness of the
 sea,
 Wave-fettered, bound in sinuous, sea-
 weed strands
 He toils toward the rounding beach,
 and stands
 One moment, white and dripping, silently,
 Cut like a cameo in lazuli,
 Then falls, betrayed by shifting shells,
 and lands
 Prone in the jeering water, and his
 hands
 Clutch for support where no support can
 be.
 So up, and down, and forward, inch
 by inch,
 He gains upon the shore, where poppies
 glow
 And sandflies dance their little lives away.
 The sucking waves retard, and tighter
 clinch
 The weeds about him, but the land-winds
 blow,
 And in the sky there blooms the sun of
 May.

PATIENCE

Be patient with you?
 When the stooping sky
 Leans down upon the hills
 And tenderly, as one who soothing

An anguish, gathers earth to lie
Embraced and girdled. Do the sun-filled
men
Feel patience then?

Be patient with you?
When the snow-girt earth
Cracks to let through a spurt
Of sudden green, and from the muddy
dirt
A snowdrop leaps, how mark its worth
To eyes frost-hardened, and do weary men
Feel patience then?

Be patient with you?
When pain's iron bars
Their rivets tighten, stern
To beat and break their victims; as they
turn,
Hopeless, there stand the purple jars
Of night to spill oblivion. Do these men
Feel patience then?

Be patient with you?
You! My sun and moon!
My basketful of flowers!
My money-bag of shining dreams! My
hours,
Windless and still, of afternoon!
You are my world and I your citizen.
What meaning can have patience
then?

APOLOGY

Be not angry with me that I bear
Your colours everywhere,
All through each crowded street,
And meet
The wonder-light in every eye,
As I go by.

Each plodding wayfarer looks up to gaze,
Blinded by rainbow haze,
The stuff of happiness,
No less,
Which wraps me in its glad-hued folds
Of peacock golds.

Before my feet the dusty, rough-paved
way
Flushes beneath its gray.
My steps fall ringed with light,
So bright,
It seems a myriad suns are strown
About the town.

Around me is the sound of sleeptied bells,
And rich perfumed smells
Hang like a wind-forgotten cloud,
And shroud
Me from close contact with the world,
I dwell impeared.

You blazon me with jewelled insignia,
A flaming nebula
Rins in my life. And yet
You set
The word upon me, unconfessed
To go unguessed.

A PETITION

I pray to be the tool which to your hand
Long use has shaped and moulded till
it be
Apt for your need, and, unconsider-
ingly,
You take it for its service. I demand
To be forgotten in the woven strand
Which grows the multi-coloured
tapstry
Of your bright life, and through its
tissues lie
A hidden, strong, sustaining, grey-toned
band.
I wish to dwell around your daylight
dreams,
The railing to the stairway of the clouds,
To guard your steps securely up, where
streams
A faery moonshine washing pale the
crowds
Of pointed stars. Remember not
whereby
You mount, protected, to the far-flung
sky.

A BLOCKHEAD

Before me lies a mass of shapeless days,
Unseparated atoms, and I must
Sort them apart and live them. Sifted
dust
Covers the formless heap. Reprieves,
delays,
There are none, ever. As a monk who
prays
The sliding beads asunder, so I thrust
Each tasteless particle aside, and just
Begin again the task which never stays.
And I have known a glory of great
suns,

When days flashed by, pulsing with joy
and fire!
Drunk bubbled wine in goblets of desire,
And felt the whipped blood laughing
as it runs!
Spilt is that liquor, my too hasty hand
Threw down the cup, and did not under-
stand.

STUPIDITY

Dearest, forgive that with my clumsy
touch
I broke and bruised your rose,
I hardly could suppose
It were a thing so fragile that my clutch
Could kill it, thus.

It stood so proudly up upon its stem,
I knew no thought of fear,
And coming very near
Fell, overbalanced, to your garment's hem,
Tearing it down.

Now, stooping, I gather, one by one,
The crimson petals, all
Outspread about my fall.
They hold their fragrance still, a blood-
red cone
Of memory.

And with my words I carve a little jar
To keep their scented dust,
Which, opening, you must
Breathe to your soul, and, breathing,
know me far
More grieved than you.

IRONY

An arid daylight shines along the beach
Dried to a grey monotony of tone,
And stranded jelly-fish melt soft upon
The sun-baked pebbles, far beyond their
reach
Sparkles a wet, reviving sea. Here bleach
The skeletons of fishes, every bone
Polished and stark, like traceries of
stone,
The joints and knuckles hardened each
to each.
And they are dead while waiting for
the sea,
The moon-pursuing sea, to come again.
Their hearts are blown away on the hot
breeze.

Only the shells and stones can wait
to be
Washed bright. For living things, who
suffer pain,
May not endure till time can bring them
ease.

HAPPINESS

Happiness, to some, elation;
Is, to others, mere stagnation.
Days of passive somnolence,
At its wildest, indolence.
Hours of empty quietness,
No delight, and no distress.

Happiness to me is wine,
Effervescent, superfine.
Full of tang and fiery pleasure,
Far too hot to leave me leisure
For a single thought beyond it.
Drunk! Forgetful! This the bond: it
Means to give one's soul to gain
Life's quintessence. Even pain
Pricks to livelier living, then
Wakes the nerves to laugh again,
Rapture's self is three parts sorrow.
Although we must die to-morrow,
Losing every thought but this;
Torn, triumphant, drowned in bliss.

Happiness: We rarely feel it.
I would buy it, beg it, steal it,
Pay in coins of dripping blood
For this one transcendent good.

THE LAST QUARTER OF
THE MOON

How long shall I tarnish the mirror of
life,
A spatter of rust on its polished steel!
The seasons reel
Like a goaded wheel.
Half-numb, half-maddened, my days are
strife.

The night is sliding towards the dawn,
And upturned hills crouch at autumn's
knees.
A torn moon flees
Through the hemlock trees,
The hours have gnawed it to feed their
spawn.

Pursuing and jeering the misshapen thing
A rabble of clouds flares out of the east.
Like dogs unleashed

After a beast,
They stream on the sky, an outflung
string.

A desolate wind, through the unpeopled
dark,
Shakes the bushes and whistles through
empty nests,
And the fierce unrests
I keep as guests
Crowd my brain with corpses, pallid and
stark.

Leave me in peace, O Spectres, who
haunt
My labouring mind, I have fought and
failed.
I have not quailed,
I was all unmailed
And naked I strove, 'tis my only vaunt.

The moon drops into the silver day
As waking out of her swoon she comes.
I hear the drums
Of milleniums
Beating the mornings I still must stay.

The years I must watch go in and out,
While I build with water, and dig in air,
And the trumpets blare
Hollow despair,
The shuddering trumpets of utter rout.

An atom tossed in a chaos made
Of yeasting worlds, which bubble and
foam.

Whence have I come?
What would be home?
I hear no answer. I am afraid!

I crave to be lost like a wind-blown flame.
Pushed into nothingness by a breath,
And quench in a wreath
Of engulfing death
This fight for a God, or this devil's game.

A TALE OF STARVATION

There once was a man whom the gods
didn't love,
And a disagreeable man was he.

He loathed his neighbours, and his
neighbours hated him,
And he cursed eternally.

He damned the sun, and he damned the
stars,
And he blasted the winds in the sky.
He sent to Hell every green, growing
thing,
And he raved at the birds as they fly.

His oaths were many, and his range was
wide,
He swore in fancy ways;
But his meaning was plain: that no
created thing
Was other than a hurt to his gaze.

He dwelt all alone, underneath a leaning
hill,
And windows toward the hill there
were none,
And on the other side they were white-
washed thick,
To keep out every spark of the sun.

When he went to market he walked all
the way
Blaspheming at the path he trod.
He cursed at those he bought of, and
swore at those he sold to,
By all the names he knew of God.

For his heart was soured in his weary old
hide,
And his hopes had curdled in his
breast.
His friend had been untrue, and his love
had thrown him over
For the chinking money-bags she liked
best.

The rats had devoured the contents of
his grain-bin,
The deer had trampled on his corn,
His brook had shrivelled in a summer
drought,
And his sheep had died unshorn.

His hens wouldn't lay, and his cow broke
loose,
And his old horse perished of a colic.
In the loft his wheat-bags were nibbled
into holes
By little, glutton mice on a frolic.

So he slowly lost all he ever had,
And the blood in his body dried.
Shrunken and mean he still lived on,
And cursed that future which had
 lied.

One day he was digging, a spade or two,
As his aching back could lift,
When he saw something glisten at the
 bottom of the trench,
And to get it out he made great shift.

So he dug, and he dived, with care and
 pain,
And the veins in his forehead stood
 taut.
At the end of an hour, when every bone
 cracked,
He gathered up what he had sought.

A dim old vase of crusted glass,
Prismed while it lay buried deep.
Shifting reds and greens, like a pigeon's
 neck.
At the touch of the sun began to leap.

It was dull in the tree-shade, but glowing
 in the light;
Flashing like an opal-stone,
Carved into a flagon; and the colours
 glanced and ran,
Where at first there had seemed to be
 none.

It had handles on each side to bear it
 up,
And a belly for the gurgling wine.
Its neck was slender, and its mouth was
 wide,
And its lip was curled and fine.

The old man saw it in the sun's bright
 stare
And the colours started up through the
 crust,
And he who had cursed at the yellow sun
 held the flask to it and wiped away
 the dust.

And he bore the flask to the brightest
 spot,
Where the shadow of the hill fell clear;
And he turned the flask, and he looked
 at the flask,
And the sun shone without his sneer.

Then he carried it home, and put it on
 a shelf,
But it was only grey in the gloom.
So he fetched a pail, and a bit of
 cloth,
And he went outside with a broom.

And he washed his windows just to let
 the sun
Lie upon his new-found vase;
And when evening came, he moved it
 down
And put it on a table near the place

Where a candle fluttered in a draught
 from the door.
The old man forgot to swear,
Watching its shadow grown a mammoth
 size,
Dancing in the kitchen there.

He forgot to revile the sun next morn-
 ing
When he found his vase afire in its
 light.
And he carried it out of the house that
 day,
And kept it close beside him until
 night.

And so it happened from day to day.
The old man fed his life
On the beauty of his vase, on its perfect
 shape.
And his soul forgot its former strife.

And the village-folk came and begged to
 see
The flagon which was dug from the
 ground.
And the old man never thought of an
 oath, in his joy
At showing what he had found.

One day the master of the village school
 Passed him as he stooped at toil,
Hoing for a bean-row, and at his side
 Was the vase, on the turned-up soil.

"My friend," said the schoolmaster,
 pompous and kind,
"That's a valuable thing you have
 there,
But it might get broken out of doors,
 It should meet with the utmost care

What are you doing with it out here?"
 "Why, Sir," said the poor old man,
 "I like to have it about, do you see?
 To be with it all I can."

"You will smash it," said the school-
 master, sternly right,
 "Mark my words and see!"
 And he walked away, while the old man
 looked
 At his treasure despondingly.

Then he smiled to himself, for it was
 his!
 He had toiled for it, and now he
 cared.
 Yes! loved its shape, and its subtle, swift
 hues,
 Which his own hard work had bared.

He would carry it round with him every-
 where,
 As it gave him joy to do.
 A fragile vase should not stand in a
 bean-row!
 Who would dare to say so? Who?

Then his heart was rested, and his fears
 gave way,
 And he bent to his hoe again. . . .
 A clod rolled down, and his foot slipped
 back,
 And he lurched with a cry of pain.

For the blade of the hoe crashed into
 glass,
 And the vase fell to iridescent sherds.
 The old man's body heaved with slow,
 dry sobs.
 He did not curse, he had no words.

He gathered the fragments, one by one,
 And his fingers were cut and torn.
 Then he made a hole in the very place
 Whence the beautiful vase had been
 borne.

He covered the hole, and he patted it
 down,
 Then he hobbled to his house and shut
 the door.
 He tore up his coat and nailed it at the
 windows
 That no beam of light should cross the
 floor.

He sat down in front of the empty
 hearth,
 And he neither eat nor drank.
 In three days they found him, dead and
 cold,
 And they said: "What a queer old
 crank!"

THE FOREIGNER

Have at you, you Devils!
 My back's to this tree,
 For you're nothing so nice
 That the hind-side of me
 Would escape your assault.
 Come on now, all three!

Here's a dandified gentleman,
 Rapier at point,
 And a wrist which whirls round
 Like a circular joint.
 A spatter of blood, man!
 That's just to anoint

And make supple your limbs.
 'Tis a pity the silk
 Of your waistcoat is stained.
 Why! Your heart's full of milk,
 And so full, it spills over!
 I'm not of your ilk.

You said so, and laughed
 At my old-fashioned hose,
 At the cut of my hair,
 At the length of my nose.
 To carve it to pattern
 I think you propose.

Your pardon, young Sir,
 But my nose and my sword
 Are proving themselves
 In quite perfect accord.
 I grieve to have spotted
 Your shirt. On my word!

And hullo! You Bully!
 That blade's not a stick
 To slash right and left,
 And my skull is too thick
 To be cleft with such cuffs
 Of a sword. Now a lick

Down the side of your face.
 What a pretty, red line!

Tell the taverns that scar
Was an honour. Don't whine
That a stranger has marked you.

The tree's there, You Swine!

Did you think to get in
At the back, while your friends
Made a little diversion
In front? So it ends,
With your sword clattering down
On the ground. 'Tis amends

I make for your courteous
Reception of me,
A foreigner, landed
From over the sea.
Your welcome was fervent
I think you'll agree.

My shoes are not buckled
With gold, nor my hair
Oiled and scented, my jacket's
Not satin, I wear
Corded breeches, wide hats,
And I make people stare!

So I do, but my heart
Is the heart of a man,
And my thoughts cannot twirl
In the limited span
'Twixt my head and my heels
As some other men's can.

I have business more strange
Than the shape of my boots,
And my interests range
From the sky, to the roots
Of this dung-hill you live in,
You half-rotted shoots

Of a mouldering tree!
Here's at you, once more.
You Apes! You Jack-fools!
You can show me the door,
And jeer at my ways,
But you're pinked to the core.

And before I have done,
I will prick my name in
With the front of my steel,
And your lily-white skin
Shall be printed with inc.
For I've come here to win!

ABSENCE

My cup is empty to-night,
Cold and dry are its sides,
Chilled by the wind from the open
window.
Empty and void, it sparkles white in the
moonlight.
The room is filled with the strange scent
Of wistaria blossoms.
They sway in the moon's radiance
And tap against the wall.
But the cup of my heart is still,
And cold, and empty.

When you come, it brims
Red and trembling with blood,
Heart's blood for your drinking;
To fill your mouth with love
And the bitter-sweet taste of a soul.

A GIFT

See! I give myself to you, Beloved!
My words are little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.
Their shapes are quaint and beautiful,
And they have many pleasant colours and
lustres
To recommend them.
Also the scent from them fills the room
With sweetness of flowers and crushed
grasses.

When I shall have given you the last one,
You will have the whole of me,
But I shall be dead.

THE BUNGLER

You glow in my heart
Like the flames of uncounted candles.
But when I go to warm my hands,
My clumsiness overturns the light,
And then I stumble
Against the tables and chairs.

FOOL'S MONEY BAGS

Outside the long window,
With his head on the stone sill,
The dog is lying,
Gazing at his Beloved.
His eyes are wet and urgent,
And his body is taut and shaking.

It is cold on the terrace;
A pale wind licks along the stone slabs,
But the dog gazes through the glass
And is content.

The Beloved is writing a letter.
Occasionally she speaks to the dog,
But she is thinking of her writing.
Does she, too, give her devotion to one
Not worthy?

MISCASE

I

I have whetted my brain until it is like
a Damascus blade,
So keen that it nicks off the floating
fringes of passers-by,
So sharp that the air would turn its edge
Were it to be twisted in flight.
Licking passions have bitten their
arabesques into it,
And the mark of them lies, in and out,
Worm-like,
With the beauty of corroded copper pat-
terned white steel.
My brain is curved like a scimitar,
And sighs at its cutting
Like a sickle mowing grass.
But of what use is all this to me!
I, who am set to crack stones
In a country lane!

MISCASE

II

My heart is like a cleft pomegranate
Bleeding crimson seeds
And dripping them on the ground.
My heart gapes because it is ripe and
over-full,
And its seeds are bursting from it.
But how is this other than a torment
to me!
I, who am shut up, with broken crockery,
In a dark closet!

ANTICIPATION

I have been temperate always,
But I am like to be very drunk
With your coming.
There have been times
I feared to walk down the street

Lest I should reel with the wine of you,
And jerk against my neighbours
As they go by.
I am parched now, and my tongue is
horrible in my mouth,
But my brain is noisy
With the clash and gurgle of filling
wine-cups.

VINTAGE

I will mix me a drink of stars, —
Large stars with polychrome needles,
Small stars jetting maroon and crimson,
Cool, quiet, green stars.
I will tear them out of the sky,
And squeeze them over an old silver cup,
And I will pour the cold scorn of my
Beloved into it,
So that my drink shall be bubbled with
ice.

It will lap and scratch
As I swallow it down;
And I shall feel it as a serpent of fire,
Coiling and twisting in my belly.
His snortings will rise to my head,
And I shall be hot, and laugh,
Forgetting that I have ever known
woman.

THE TREE OF SCARLET BERRIES

The rain gullies the garden paths
And tinkles on the broad sides of grass
blades.
A tree, at the end of my arm, is hazy
with mist.
Even so, I can see that it has red berries,
A scarlet fruit,
Filmed over with moisture.
It seems as though the rain,
Dripping from it,
Should be tinged with colour.
I desire the berries,
But, in the mist, I only scratch my hand
on the thorns.
Probably, too, they are bitter.

OBLIGATION

Hold your apron wide
That I may pour my gifts into it,
So that scarcely shall your two arms
hinder them
From falling to the ground.

I would pour them upon you
And cover you,
For greatly do I feel this need
Of giving you something,
Even these poor things.

Dearest of my Heart!

THE TAXI

When I go away from you
The world beats dead
Like a slackened drum.
I call out for you against the juttred stars
And shout into the ridges of the wind.
Streets coming fast,
One after the other,
Wedge you away from me,
And the lamps of the city prick my eyes
So that I can no longer see your face.
Why should I leave you,
To wound myself upon the sharp edges
of the night?

THE GIVER OF STARS

Hold your soul open for my welcoming.
Let the quiet of your spirit bathe me
With its clear and rippled coolness,
That, loose-limbed and weary, I find rest,
Outstretched upon your peace, as on a
bed of ivory.

Let the flickering flame of your soul play
all about me,
That into my limbs may come the keen-
ness of fire,
The life and joy of tongues of flame,
And, going out from you, tightly strung
and in tune,
I may rouse the bleary-eyed world,
And pour into it the beauty which you
have begotten.

THE TEMPLE

Between us leapt a gold and scarlet flame.
Into the hollow of the cupped, arched
blue
Of Heaven it rose. Its flickering
tongues up-drew
And vanished in the sunshine. How it
came
We guessed not, nor what thing could be
its name.

From each to each had sprung those
sparks which flew
Together into fire. But we knew
The winds would slap and quench it in
their game.
And so we graved and fashioned
marble blocks
To treasure it, and placed them round
about.
With pillared porticos we wreathed the
whole,
And roofed it with bright bronze. Be-
hind carved locks
Flowered the tall and sheltered flame.
Without,
The baffled winds thrust at a column's
bole.

EPITAPH OF A YOUNG POET WHO DIED BEFORE HAVING ACHIEVED SUCCESS

Beneath this sod lie the remains
Of one who died of growing pains.

IN ANSWER TO A REQUEST

You ask me for a sonnet. Ah, my Dear,
Can clocks tick back to yesterday at
noon?
Can cracked and fallen leaves recall
last June
And leap up on the boughs, now stiff
and serc?
For your sake, I would go and seek the
year,
Faded beyond the purple ranks of
dune,
Blown sands of drifted hours, which
the moon
Streaks with a ghostly finger, and her
sneer
Pulls at my lengthening shadow. Yes,
'tis that!
My shadow stretches forward, and the
ground
Is dark in front because the light's
behind.
It is grotesque, with such a funny hat,
In watching it and walking I have
found
More than enough to occupy my mind.
I cannot turn, the light would make me
blind.

POPPY SEED

THE GREAT ADVENTURE
OF MAX BREUCK

I

A yellow band of light upon the street
Pours from an open door, and makes a
wide
Pathway of bright gold across a sheet
Of calm and liquid moonshine From in
side
Come shouts and streams of laughter, and
a snatch
Of song, soon drowned and lost again in
mirth,
The clip of tankards on a table top,
And stir of booted heels Against the
patch
Of candle light a shadow falls, its girth
Proclaims the host himself, and master
of his shop

II

This is the tavern of one Hilverdink,
Jan Hilverdink, whose wines are much
esteemed
Within his cellar men can have to drink
The rarest cordials old monks ever
schemed
To coax from pulpy grapes, and with nice
art
Improve and spice their virgin juiciness
Here froth the amber beer of many a
brew,
Crowning each pewter tankard with as
smart
A cap as ever in his wantonness
Winter set glittering on top of an old
yew

III

Tall candles stand upon the table, where
Are twisted glasses, ruby sparkled with
wine,
Clarets and ports Those topaz bumpers
were
Draimed from slim, long necked bottles of
the Rhine
The centre of the board is piled with
pipes,

Slender and clean, the still unbaptized
clay
Awaits its burning fate Behind, the
vault
Stretches from dim to dark, a groping
way
Bordered by casks and puncheons, whose
brass stripes
And bands gleam dully still, beyond the
gay tumult.

IV

"For good old Master Hilverdink, a
toast!"
Clamoured a youth with tassels on his
boots
"Bring out your oldest brandy for a boast,
From that small barrel in the very roots
Of your deep cellar, man Why here is
Max!
Ho! Welcome, Max, you're scarcely here
in time
We want to drink to old Jan's luck, and
smoke
His best tobacco for a grand climax
Here, Jan, a paper, fragrant as crushed
thyme,
We'll have the best to wish you luck, or
may we choke!"

V

Max Breuck unclasped his broadcloth
cloak, and sat
"Well thought of, Franz, here's luck to
Mynheer Jan"
The host set down a jar, then to a
vat
Lost in the distance of his cellar, ran
Max took a pipe as graceful as the
stem
Of some long tulip, crammed it full, and
drew
The pungent smoke deep to his grateful
lung
It curled all blue throughout the cave
and flew
Into the silver night At once there flung
Into the crowded shop a boy, who cried
to them

VI

"Oh, sirs, is there some learned lawyer here,
Some advocate, or all-wise counsellor?
My master sent me to inquire where
Such men do mostly be, but every door
Was shut and barred, for late has grown
the hour.
I pray you tell me where I may now find
One versed in law, the matter will not
wait."
"I am a lawyer, boy," said Max, "my
mind
Is not locked to my business, though 'tis
late.
I shall be glad to serve what way is in
my power."

VII

Then once more, cloaked and ready, he
set out,
Tripping the footsteps of the eager boy
Along the dappled cobbles, while the rout
Within the tavern jeered at his employ.
Through new-burst elm leaves filtered the
white moon,
Who peered and splashed between the
twinkling boughs,
Flooded the open spaces, and took flight
Before tall, scurried houses in platoon,
Guarded by shadows. Past the Custom
House
They took their hurried way in the
Spring-scented night.

VIII

Before a door which fronted a canal
The boy halted. A dim tree-shaded spot.
The water lapped the stones in musical
And rhythmicappings, and a galliot
Slumbered at anchor with no light
aboard.
The boy knocked twice, and steps ap-
proached. A flame
Winked through the keyhole, then a key
was turned,
And through the open door Max went
toward
Another door, whence sound of voices
came.
He entered a large room where candelabra
burned.

IX

An aged man in quilted dressing gown
Rose up to greet him. "Sir," said Max,
"you sent
Your messenger to seek throughout the
town
A lawyer. I have small accomplishment,
But I am at your service, and my name
Is Max Brenck, Counsellor, at your com-
mand."
"Mynheer," replied the aged man,
"obliged
Am I, and count myself much privileged.
I am Cornelius Kurler, and my fame
Is better known on distant oceans than
on land."

X

My ship has tasted water in strange seas,
And bartered goods at still uncharted
isles.
She's oft coquetted with a tropic breeze,
And sheered off hurricanes with jaunty
smiles."
"Tush, Kurler," here broke in the other
man,
"Enough of poetry, draw the deed and
sign."
The old man seemed to wizen at the
voice,
"My good friend, Grootver, —" he at
once began.
"No introductions, let us have some wine,
And business, now that you at last have
made your choice."

XI

A harsh and disagreeable man he proved
to be,
This Grootver, with no single kindly
thought.
Kurler explained, his old hands nervously
Twisting his beard. His vessel he had
bought
From Grootver. He had thought to soon
repay
The ducats borrowed, but an adverse
wind
Had so delayed him that his cargo
brought
But half its proper price, the very day

He came to port he stepped ashore to find
The market glutted and his counted
profits naught.

Little by little Max made out the way
That Grootver pressed that poor harassed
old man.
His money he must have, too long delay
Had turned the usurer to a ruffian.
"But let me take my ship, with many
bales
Of cotton stuffs dyed crimson, green, and
blue,
Cunningly patterned, made to suit the
taste
Of mandarin's ladies, when my battered
sails
Open for home, such stores will I bring
you
That all your former ventures will be
counted waste.

XIII

Such light and foamy silks, like crinkled
cream,
And indigo more blue than sun-whipped
seas,
Spices and fragrant trees, a massive beam
Of sandalwood, and pungent China teas,
Tobacco, coffee!" Grootver only laughed.
Max heard it all, and worse than all he
heard
The deed to which the sailor gave his
word.
He shivered, 'twas as if the villain gaffed
The old man with a boat-hook; bleeding,
spent,
He begged for life nor knew at all the
road he went.

XIV

For Kurler had a daughter, young and
gay,
Carefully reared and shielded, rarely seen.
But on one black and most unfriendly day
Grootver had caught her as she passed
between
The kitchen and the garden. She had run
in fear of him, his evil leering eye,
And when he came she, bolted in her
room,

Refused to show, though gave no reason
why.

The spinning of her future had begun,
On quiet nights she heard the whirring
of her doom.

XV

Max mended an old goosequill by the fire,
Loathing his work, but seeing no thing
to do.
He felt his hands were building up the
pyre
To burn two souls, and seized with
vertigo
He staggered to his chair. Before him lay
White paper still unspotted by a crime.
"Now, young man, write," said Grootver
in his ear.
"If in two years my vessel should yet
stay
From Amsterdam, I give Grootver, some-
time
A friend, my daughter for his lawful wife.
Now swear."

XVI

And Kurler swore, a palsied, tottering
sound,
And traced his name, a shaking, wander-
ing line.
Then dazed he sat there, speechless from
his wound.
Grootver got up: "Fair voyage, the brig-
antine!"
He shuffled from the room, and left the
house.
His footsteps wore to silence down the
street.
At last the aged man began to rouse.
With help he once more gained his
trembling feet.
"My daughter, Mynheer Breuck, is
friendless now.
Will you watch over her? I ask a solemn
vow."

XVII

Max laid his hand upon the old man's
arm,
"Before God, sir, I vow, when you are
gone,
So to protect your daughter from all harm

As one man may." Thus sorrowful,
forlorn,
The situation to Max Breuck appeared,
He gave his promise almost without
thought,
Nor looked to see a difficulty. "Bred
Gently to watch a mother left alone;
Bound by a dying father's wish, who
feared
The world's accustomed harshness when
he should be dead;

XVIII

Such was my case from youth, Mynheer
Kurler.
Last Winter she died also, and my days
Are passed in work, lest I should grieve
for her,
And undo habits used to earn her praise.
My leisure I will gladly give to see
Your household and your daughter prosperous."
The sailor said his thanks, but turned
away.
He could not brook that his humility,
So little wanted, and so tremulous,
Should first before a stranger make such
great display.

XIX

"Come herc to-morrow as the bells ring
noon,
I sail at the full sea, my daughter then
I will make known to you. 'Twill be a
boon
If after I have bid good-by, and when
Her eyeballs scorch with watching me
depart,
You bring her home again. She lives
with one
Old serving-woman, who has brought her
up,
But that is no friend for so free a heart.
No head to match her questions. It is
done.
And I must sail away to come and brim
her cup.

XX

My ship's the fastest that owns Amster-
dam
As home, so not a letter can you send.

I shall be back, before to where I am
Another ship could reach. Now your
stipend —"
Quickly Breuck interposed. "When you
once more
Tread on the stones which pave our
streets. — Good night!
To-morrow I will be, at stroke of noon,
At the great wharf." Then hurrying, in
spite
Of cake and wine the old man pressed
upon
Him ere he went, he took his leave and
shut the door.

XXI

'Twas noon in Amsterdam, the day was
clear,
And sunshine tipped the pointed roofs
with gold.
The brown canals ran liquid bronze, for
here
The sun sank deep into the waters cold.
And every clock and belfry in the town
Hammered, and struck, and rang. Such
peals of bells,
To shake the sunny morning into life,
And to proclaim the middle, and the
crown,
Of this most sparkling daytime! The
crowd swells,
Laughing and pushing toward the quays
in friendly strife.

XXII

The "Horn of Fortune" sails away to-day.
At highest tide she lets her anchor go,
And starts for China. Saucy popinjay!
Giddy in freshest paint she curtsies low,
And beckons to her boats to let her start.
Blue is the ocean, with a flashing breeze.
The shining waves are quick to take her
part.
They push and spatter her. Her sails are
loose,
Her tackles hanging, waiting men to seize
And haul them taut, with chanty-singing,
as they choose.

XXIII

At the great wharf's edge Mynheer Kurler
stands,
And by his side, his daughter, young
Christine.

Max Breuck is there, his hat held in his hands,
 Bowing before them both. The brigantine
 Bounces impatient at the long delay,
 Curvets and jumps, a cable's length from shore.
 A heavy galliot unloads on the walls
 Round, yellow cheeses, like gold cannon balls
 Stacked on the stones in pyramids. Once more
 Kurler has kissed Christine, and now he is away.

XXIV

Christine stood rigid like a frozen stone,
 Her hands wrung pale in effort at control.
 Max moved aside and let her be alone,
 For grief exacts each penny of its toll.
 The dancing boat tossed on the glinting sea.
 A sun-path swallowed it in flaming light,
 Then, shrunk a cockleshell, it came again
 Upon the other side. Now on the lee
 It took the "Horn of Fortune." Straining sight
 Could see it hauled aboard, men pulling on the crane.

XXV

Then up above the eager brigantine,
 Along her slender masts, the sails took flight,
 Were sheeted home, and ropes were coiled. The shine
 Of the wet anchor, when its heavy weight
 Rose splashing to the deck. These things they saw,
 Christine and Max, upon the crowded quay.
 They saw the sails grow white, then blue in shade,
 The ship had turned, caught in a windy flaw
 She glided imperceptibly away,
 Drew farther off and in the bright sky seemed to fade.

XXVI

Home, through the emptying streets, Max took Christine,
 Who would have hid her sorrow from his gaze.

Before the iron gateway, clasped between
 Each garden wall, he stopped. She, in amaze,
 Asked, "Do you enter not then, Mynheer Breuck?
 My father told me of your courtesy.
 Since I am now your charge, 'tis meet for me
 To show such hospitality as maiden may,
 Without disdaining rules must not be broke.
 Katrina will have coffee, and she bakes to-day."

XXVII

She straight unhasped the tall, beflowered gate.
 Curled into tendrils, twisted into cones
 Of leaves and roses, iron infoliate,
 It guards the pleasance, and its stiffened bones
 Are budded with much peering at the rows,
 And beds, and arbours, which it keeps inside.
 Max started at the beauty, at the glare
 Of tints. At either end was set a wide
 Path strewn with fine, red gravel, and such shows
 Of tulips in their splendour flaunted everywhere!

XXVIII

From side to side, midway each path, there ran
 A longer one which cut the space in two.
 And, like a tunnel some magician
 Has wrought in twinkling green, an alley grew,
 Pleached thick and walled with apple trees; their flowers
 Incensed the garden, and when Autumn came
 The plump and heavy apples crowding stood
 And tapped against the harbour. Then the dame
 Katrina shook them down, in pelting showers
 They plunged to earth, and died transformed to sugared food.

XXIX

Against the high, encircling walls were
 grapes,
 Nailed close to feel the baking of the sun
 From glowing bricks. Their microscopic
 shapes
 Half hidden by serrated leaves. And one
 Old cherry tossed its branches near the
 door.
 Bordered along the wall, in beds between,
 Flickering, streaming, nodding in the air,
 The pride of all the garden, there were
 more
 Tulips than Max had ever dreamed or
 seen.
 They jostled, mobbed, and danced. Max
 stood at helpless stare.

XXX

"Within the harbour, Mynheer Breuck, I'll
 bring
 Coffee and cakes, a pipe, and Father's
 best
 Tobacco, brought from countries har-
 bouring
 Dawn's earliest footstep. Wait." With
 girlish zest
 To please her guest she flew. A moment
 more
 She came again, with her old nurse be-
 hind.
 Then, sitting on the bench and knitting
 fast,
 She talked as someone with a noble store
 Of hidden fancies, blown upon the wind,
 Eager to flutter forth and leave their
 silent past.

XXXI

The little apple leaves above their heads
 Let fall a quivering sunshine. Quiet, cool,
 In blossomed boughs they sat. Beyond,
 the beds
 Of tulips blazed, a proper vestibule
 And antechamber to the rainbow. Dyes
 Of prised richness: Carmine. Madder.
 Blues
 Tinging dark browns to purple. Silvers
 flushed
 To amethyst and tinct with gold. Round
 eyes

Of scarlet, spotting tender saffron hues.
 Violets sunk to blacks, and reds in orange
 crushed.

XXXII

Of every pattern and in every shade.
 Nacreous, iridescent, mottled, checked.
 Some purest sulphur-yellow, others made
 An ivory-white with disks of copper
 flecked.
 Sprinkled and striped, tasselled, or keenest
 edged.
 Striated, powdered, freckled, long or short.
 They bloomed, and seemed strange won-
 der-moths new-fledged,
 Born of the spectrum wedded to a flame.
 The shade within the harbour made a port
 To o'ertaxed eyes, its still, green twilight
 rest became.

XXXIII

Her knitting-needles clicked and Christine
 talked,
 This child matured to woman unaware,
 The first time left alone. Now dreams
 once balked
 Found utterance. Max thought her very
 fair.
 Beneath her cap her ornaments shone
 gold,
 And purest gold they were. Kurler was
 rich
 And heedful. Her old maiden aunt had
 died
 Whose darling care she was. Now, grow-
 ing bold,
 She asked, had Max a sister? Dropped a
 stitch
 At her own candour. Then she paused
 and softly sighed.

XXXIV

Two years was long! She loved her father
 well,
 But fears she had not. He had always
 been
 Just sailed or sailing. And she must not
 dwell
 On sad thoughts, he had told her so, and
 seen
 Her smile at parting. But she sighed once
 more.

Two years was long; 'twas not one hour
yet!
Mynheer Grootver she would not see at
all.
Yes, yes, she knew, but ere the date so set,
The "Horn of Fortune" would be at the
wall.
When Max had bid farewell, she watched
him from the door.

XXXV

The next day, and the next, Max went to
ask
The health of Jufvrouw Kurler, and the
news:
Another tulip blown, or the great task
Of gathering petals which the high wind
strews;
The polishing of floors, the pictured tiles
Well scrubbed, and oaken chairs most
deftly oiled.
Such things were Christine's world, and
his was she.
Winter drew near, his sun was in her
smiles.
Another Spring, and at his law he toiled,
Unspoken hope counselled a wise effi-
ciency.

XXXVI

Max Breuck was honour's soul, he knew
himself
The guardian of this girl; no more, no
less.
As one in charge of guineas on a shelf
Loose in a china teapot, may confess
His need, but may not borrow till his
friend
Comes back to give. So Max, in honour,
said
No word of love or marriage; but the days
He clipped off on his almanac. The end
Must come! The second year, with feet
of lead,
Lagged slowly by till Spring had plumped
the willow sprays.

XXXVII

Two years had made Christine a woman
grown,
With dignity and gently certain pride.
But all her childhood fancies had not
flown,

Her thoughts in lovely dreamings seemed
to glide.
Max was her trusted friend, did she con-
fess
A closer happiness? Max could not tell.
Two years were over and his life he found
Sphered and complete. In restless eager-
ness
He waited for the "Horn of Fortune."
Well
Had he his promise kept, abating not one
pound.

XXXVIII

Spring slipped away to Summer. Still no
glass
Sighted the brigantine. Then Grootver
came
Demanding Jufvrouw Kurler. His tres-
pass
Was justified, for he had won the game.
Christine begged time, more time! Mid-
summer went,
And Grootver waxed impatient. Still the
ship
Tarrid. Christine, betrayed and weary,
sank
To dreadful terrors. One day, crazed, she
sent
For Max. "Come quickly," said her note,
"I skip
The worst distress until we meet. The
world is blank."

XXXIX

Through the long sunshine of late after-
noon
Max went to her. In the pleached alley,
lost
In bitter reverie, he found her soon.
And sitting down beside her, at the cost
Of all his secret, "Dear," said he, "what
thing
So suddenly has happened?" Then, in
tears,
She told that Grootver, on the following
morn,
Would come to marry her, and shud-
dering:
"I will die rather, death has lesser fears."
Max felt the shackles drop from the oath
which he had sworn.

XL

"My Dearest One, the hid joy of my heart!
I love you, oh! you must indeed have known.
In strictest honour I have played my part;
But all this misery has overthrown
My scruples. If you love me, marry me
Before the sun has dipped behind those trees.
You cannot be wed twice, and Grootver,
foiled,
Can eat his anger. My care it shall be
To pay your father's debt, by such degrees
As I can compass, and for years I've
greatly toiled.

XLI

This is not haste, Christine, for long
I've known
My love, and silence forced upon my lips.
I worship you with all the strength I've
shown
In keeping faith." With pleading finger
tips
He touched her arm. "Christine! Be-
loved! Think.
Let us not tempt the future. Dearest,
speak,
I love you. Do my words fall too swift
now?
They've been in leash so long upon the
brink."
She sat quite still, her body loose and
weak.
Then into him she melted, all her soul at
flow.

XLII

And they were married ere the westerling
sun
Had disappeared behind the garden trees.
The evening poured on them its benison,
And flower-scents, that only night-time
frees,
Rose up around them from the beamy
ground,
Silvered and shadowed by a tranquil
moon.
Within the arbour, long they lay em-
braced,

In such enraptured sweetness as they
found
Close-partnered each to each, and think-
ing soon
To be enwoven, long ere night to morn-
ing faced.

XLIII

At last Max spoke, "Dear Heart, this
night is ours,
To watch it pale, together, into dawn,
Pressing our souls apart like opening
flowers
Until our lives, through quivering bodies
drawn,
Are mingled and confounded. Then, far
spent,
Our eyes will close to undisturbed rest.
For that desired thing I leave you now.
To pinnacle this day's accomplishment,
By telling Grootver that a bootless quest
Is his, and that his schemes have met a
knock-down blow."

XLIV

But Christine clung to him with sobbing
cries,
Pleading for love's sake that he leave her
not.
And wound her arms about his knees and
thighs
As he stood over her. With dread, begot
Of Grootver's name, and silence, and the
night,
She shook and trembled. Words in moan-
ing plaint
Wooded him to stay. She feared, she
knew not why,
Yet greatly feared. She seemed some an-
guished saint
Martyred by visions. Max Breuck soothed
her fright
With wisdom, then stepped out under the
cooling sky.

XLV

But at the gate once more she held him
close
And quenched her heart again upon his
lips.
"My Sweatheart, why this terror? I pro-
pose

But to be gone one hour! Evening slips
 Away, this errand must be done." "Max!
 Max!
 First goes my father, if I lose you now!"
 She grasped him as in panic lest she
 down.
 Softly he laughed, "One hour through
 the town
 By moonlight! That's no place for foul
 attacks.
 Dearest, be comforted, and clear that
 troubled brow.

XLVI

One hour, Dear, and then, no more alone.
 We front another day as man and wife.
 I shall be back almost before I'm gone,
 And midnight shall anoint and crown our
 life."
 Then through the gate he passed. Along
 the street
 She watched his buttons gleaming in the
 moon.
 He stopped to wave and turned the gar-
 den wall.
 Straight she sank down upon a mossy seat.
 Her senses, mist-encircled by a swoon,
 Swayed to unconsciousness beneath its
 wreathing pall.

XLVII

Briskly Max walked beside the still canal.
 His step was firm with purpose. Not a jot
 He feared this meeting, nor the rancorous
 gall
Grootver would spit on him who marred
his plot.
 He dreaded no man, since he could pro-
 tect
 Christine. His wife! He stopped and
 laughed aloud.
 His starved life had not fitted him for joy.
 It strained him to the utmost to reject
 Even this hour with her. His heart beat
 loud.
 "Damn Grootver, who can force my time
 to this employ!"

XLVIII

He laughed again. What boyish uncon-
 trol
 To be so racked. Then felt his ticking
 watch.

In half an hour Grootver would know the
 whole.
 And he would be returned, lifting the
 latch
 Of his own gate, eager to take Christine
 And crush her to his lips. How bear delay?
 He broke into a run. In front, a line
 Of candle-light banded the cobbled street.
Hilverdink's tavern! Not for many a day
Had he been there to take his old, accus-
tomed seat.

XLIV

"Why, Max! Stop, Max!" And out they
 came pell-mell,
 His old companions. "Max, where have
 you been?
 Not drink with us? Indeed you serve us
 well!
 How many months is it since we have
 seen
 You here? Jan, Jan, you slow, old dod-
 dering goat!
 Here's Mynheer Breuck come back again
 at last,
 Stir your old bones to welcome him, Fie,
 Max,
 Business! And after hours! Fill your
 throat;
 Here's beer or brandy. Now, boys, hold
 him fast.
 Put down your cane, dear man. What
 really vicious whacks!"

L

They forced him to a seat, and held him
 there,
 Despite his anger, while the hideous joke
 Was tossed from hand to hand. Franz
 poured with care
 A brimming glass of whiskey. "Here,
 we've broke
 Into a virgin barrel for you, drink!
 Tut! Tut! Just hear him! Married! Who,
 and when?
 Married, and out on business. Clever
 Spark!
 Which lie's the likeliest? Come, Max, do
 think."
 Swollen with fury, struggling with these
 men,
 Max cursed hilarity which must needs
 have a mark.

LI

Forcing himself to steadiness, he tried
 To quell the uproar, told them what he
 dared
 Of his own life and circumstance. Implied
 Most urgent matters, time could ill be
 spared.
 In jesting mood his comrades heard his
 tale,
 And scoffed at it. He felt his anger more
 Goaded and bursting; — "Cowards! Is
 no one loth
 To mock at duty —" Here they called
 for ale,
 And forced a pipe upon him. With an
 oath
 He shivered it to fragments on the earthen
 floor.

LII

Sobered a little by his violence,
 And by the host who begged them to be
 still,
 Nor injure his good name, "Max, no
 offence,"
 They blurted, "you may leave now if you
 will."
 "One moment, Max," said Franz. "We've
 gone too far.
 I ask your pardon for our foolish joke.
 It started in a wager ere you came.
 The talk somehow had fall'n on drugs,
 a jar
 I brought from China, herbs the natives
 smoke,
 Was with me, and I thought merely to
 play a game.

LIII

Its properties are to induce a sleep
 Fraught with adventure, and the flight of
 time
 Is inconceivable in swiftness. Deep
 Sunken in slumber, imageries sublime
 Flatter the senses, or some fearful dream
 Holds them enmeshed. Years pass which
 on the clock
 Are but so many seconds. We agreed
 That the next man who came should
 prove the scheme;

And you were he. Jan handed you the
 crock.

Two whiffs! And then the pipe was broke,
 and you were freed."

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"It is a lie, a damned, infernal lie!"
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 You'll choose among you one who'll an-
 swer for
 Your most unseasonable mirth. Good-
 night
 And good-by, — gentlemen. You'll hear
 from me."
 But Franz had caught him at the very
 door,
 "It is no lie, Max Breuck, and for your
 plight
 I am to blame. Come back, and we'll talk
 quietly.

LV

You have no business, that is why we
 laughed,
 Since you had none a few minutes ago.
 As to your wedding, naturally we chaffed,
 Knowing the length of time it takes to do
 A simple thing like that in this slow world.
 Indeed, Max, 'twas a dream. Forgive me
 then.
 I'll burn the drug if you prefer." But
 Breuck
 Muttered and stared, — "A lie." And
 then he hurled,
 Distraught, this word at Franz: "Prove it.
 And when
 It's proven, I'll believe. That thing shall
 be your work.

LVI

I'll give you just one week to make your
 case.
 On August thirty-first, eighteen-fourteen,
 I shall require your proof." With won-
 dering face
 Franz cried, "A week to August, and
 fourteen
 The year! You're mad, 'tis April now.

But to be gone one hour! Evening slips
Away, this errand must be done." "Max!

Max!
First goes my father, if I lose you now!"
She grasped him as in panic lest she
drown.

Softly he laughed, "One hour through
the town

By moonlight! That's no place for foul
attacks.

Dearest, be comforted, and clear that
troubled brow.

XLVI

One hour, Dear, and then, no more alone.
We front another day as man and wife.
I shall be back almost before I'm gone,
And midnight shall anoint and crown our
life."

Then through the gate he passed. Along
the street

She watched his buttons gleaming in the
moon.

He stopped to wave and turned the gar-
den wall.

Straight she sank down upon a mossy seat.
Her senses, mist-encircled by a swoon,
Swayed to unconsciousness beneath its
wreathing pall.

XLVII

Briskly Max walked beside the still canal.
His step was firm with purpose. Not a jot
He feared this meeting, nor the rancorous
gall

Grootver would spit on him who marred
his plot.

He dreaded no man, since he could pro-
tect

Christine. His wife! He stopped and
laughed aloud.

His starved life had not fitted him for joy.
It strained him to the utmost to reject
Even this hour with her. His heart beat
loud.

"Damn Grootver, who can force my time
to this employ!"

XLVIII

He laughed again. What boyish uncon-
trol

To be so racked. Then felt his ticking
watch.

In half an hour Grootver would know the
whole.

And he would be returned, lifting the
latch

Of his own gate, eager to take Christine
And crush her to his lips. How bear delay?
He broke into a run. In front, a line
Of candle-light banded the cobbled street.
Hilverdink's tavern! Not for many a day
Had he been there to take his old, accus-
tomed seat.

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fourteen
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April, and eighteen twelve" Max staggered, caught
 A chan,— "April two years ago! Indeed,
 Or you, or I, are mad I know not how
 Either could blunder so" Hilverdmik
 brought
 "The Amsterdam Gazette," and Max was
 forced to read

LVII

"Eighteen hundred and twelve," in largest print,
 And next to it, "April the twenty first"
 The letters smudged and jumbled, but by dint
 Of straining every nerve to meet the worst,
 He read it, and into his pounding brain
 Tumbled a horror Like a roaring sea
 Foreboding shipwreck, came the message plain
 "This is two years ago! What of Christine?"
 He fled the cellar, in his agony
 Running to outstrip Fate, and save his
 holy shrine.

LVIII

The darkened buildings echoed to his feet
 Clap clapping on the pavement as he ran
 Across moon misted squares clamoured
 his fleet
 And terror winged steps His heart began
 To labour at the speed And still no sign,
 No flutter of a leaf against the sky
 And thus should be the garden wall, and
 round
 The corner, the old gate No even line
 Was this! No wall! And then a fearful
 cry
 Shattered the stillness Two stiff houses
 filled the ground

LIX

Shoulder to shoulder, like dragoons in
 line,
 They stood, and Max knew them to be
 the ones
 To right and left of Kurler's garden Spine
 Rigid next frozen spine No mellow tones
 Of ancient gilded iron, undulate,
 Expanding in wide circles and broad
 curves,

The twisted non of the garden gate,
 Was there The houses touched and left
 no space
 Between With glassy eyes and shaking
 nerves
 Max fled Then mad with fear, fled still,
 and left that place

LX

Stumbling and panting, on he ran, and on
 His slobbering lips could only cry, "Christine!"
 My Dearest Love! My Wife! Where are
 you gone?
 What future is our past? What Saturday
 mine,
 Sardonic devil's jest has bid us live
 Two years together in a puff of smoke?
 It was no dream, I swear it! In some star,
 Or still imprisoned in Time's egg, you give
 Me love. I feel it Dearest Dear, this
 stroke
 Shall never part us, I will reach to where
 you are."

LXI

His burning eyeballs stared into the dark
 The moon had long been set And still
 he cried
 "Christine! My Love! Christine!" A
 sudden spark
 Pricked through the gloom, and shortly
 Max espied
 With his uncertain vision, so within
 Distracted he could scarcely trust its truth,
 A latticed window where a crimson gleam
 Spangled the blackness, and hung from
 a pin,
 An iron crane, were three gilt balls His
 youth
 Had taught their meaning, now they
 closed upon his dream

LXII

Softly he knocked against the casement,
 wide
 It flew, and a cracked voice his business
 there
 Demanded The door opened, and inside
 Max stepped He saw a candle held in air
 Above the head of a gray bearded Jew
 "Simeon Isaacs, Mynheer, can I serve

You?" "Yes, I think you can. Do you keep arms?
I want a pistol." Quick the old man grew
Livid. "Mynheer, a pistol! Let me swerve
You from your purpose. Life brings often
false alarms —"

LXIII

"Peace, good old Isaacs, why should you suppose
My purpose deadly. In good truth I've been
Blest above others. You have many rows
Of pistols it would seem. Here, this shagreen
Case holds one that I fancy. Silvered mounts
Are to my taste. These letters 'C.D.L.'
Its former owner? Dead, you say. Poor Ghost!
'Twill serve my turn though —" Hastily he counts
The florins down upon the table. "Well,
Good-night, and wish me luck for your to-morrow's toast."

LXIV

Into the night again he hurried, now
Pale and in haste; and far beyond the town
He set his goal. And then he wondered how
Poor C.D.L. had come to die. "It's grown
Handy in killing, maybe, this I've bought,
And will work punctually." His sorrow fell
Upon his senses, shutting out all else.
Again he wept, and called, and blindly fought
The heavy miles away. "Christine. I'm well.
I'm coming. My Own Wifel" He lurched
with failing pulse.

LXV

Along the dyke the keen air blew in gusts,
And grasses bent and wailed before the wind.
The Zuider Zee, which croons all night
and thrusts

Long stealthy fingers up some way to find
And crumble down the stones, moaned baffled. Here
The wide-armed windmills looked like gallows-trees.
No lights were burning in the distant thorps.
Max laid aside his coat. His mind, half-clear,
Babbled "Christine!" A shot split through the breeze.
The cold stars winked and glittered at his chilling corpse.

SANCTA MARIA, SUCCURRE MISERIS

Dear Virgin Mary, far away,
Look down from Heaven while I pray.
Open your golden casement high,
And lean way out beyond the sky.
I am so little, it may be
A task for you to harken me.

O Lady Mary, I have bought
A candle, as the good priest taught.
I only had one penny, so
Old Goody Jenkins let it go.
It is a little bent, you see.
But Oh, be merciful to me!

I have not anything to give,
Yet I so long for him to live.
A year ago he sailed away
And not a word unto to-day.
I've strained my eyes from the sea-wall
But never does he come at all.

Other ships have entered port
Their voyages finished, long or short,
And other sailors have received
Their welcomes, while I sat and grieved.
My heart is bursting for his hail,
O Virgin, let me spy his sail.

*Hull down on the edge of a sun-soaked sea
Sparkle the bellying sails for me.
Taut to the push of a rousing wind
Shaking the sea till it foams behind,
The tightened rigging is shrill with the song:
"We are back again who were gone so long."*

One afternoon I bumped my head.
I sat on a post and wished I were dead
Like father and mother, for no one cared
Whither I went or how I fared.
A man's voice said, "My little lad,
Here's a bit of a toy to make you glad."

Then I opened my eyes and saw him
plain,
With his sleeves rolled up, and the dark
blue stain

Of tattooed skin, where a flock of quail
Flew up to his shoulder and met the tail
Of a dragon curled, all pink and green,
Which sprawled on his back, when it was
seen.

He held out his hand and gave to me
The most marvellous top which could
ever be.

It had ivory eyes, and jet-black rings,
And a red stone carved into little wings,
All joined by a twisted golden line,
And set in the brown wood, even and
fine.

Forgive me, Lady, I have not brought
My treasure to you as I ought,
But he said to keep it for his sake
And comfort myself with it, and take
Joy in its spinning, and so I do.
It couldn't mean quite the same to you.

Every day I met him there,
Where the fisher-nets dry in the sunny air.
He told me stories of courts and kings,
Of storms at sea, of lots of things.
The top he said was a sort of sign
That something in the big world was
mine.

*Blue and white on a sun-shot
ocean.
Against the horizon a glint in
motion.
Full in the grasp of a shoving
wind,
Trailing her bubbles of foam be-
hind,
Singing and shouting to port she
races,
A flying harp, with her sheets and
braces.*

O Queen of Heaven, give me heed,
I am in very utmost need.

He loved me, he was all I had,
And when he came it made the sad
Thoughts disappear. This very day
Send his ship home to me I pray.

I'll be a priest, if you want it so,
I'll work till I have enough to go
And study Latin to say the prayers
On the rosary our old priest wears.
I wished to be a sailor too,
But I will give myself to you.

I'll never even spin my top,
But put it away in a box. I'll stop
Whistling the sailor-songs he taught.
I'll save my pennies till I have bought
A silver heart in the market square,
I've seen some beautiful, white ones there.

I'll give up all I want to do
And do whatever you tell me to.
Heavenly Lady, take away
All the games I like to play,
Take my life to fill the score,
Only bring him back once more!

*The poplars shiver and turn their
leaves,
And the wind through the belfry
moans and grieves.
The gray dust whirls in the market
square,
And the silver hearts are covered
with care
By thick tarpaulins. Once again
The bay is black under heavy rain.*

The Queen of Heaven has shut her door.
A little boy weeps and prays no more.

AFTER HEARING A WALTZ BY BARTOK

But why did I kill him? Why? Why?
In the small, gilded room, near the
stair?
My ears rack and throb with his cry,
And his eyes goggle under his hair,
As my fingers sink into the fair
White skin of his throat. It was I!

I killed him! My God! Don't you hear?
I shook him until his red tongue
Hung flapping out through the black,
querc,

Swollen lines of his lips. And I clung
With my nails drawing blood, while I
flung
The loose, heavy body in fear.

Fear lest he should still not be dead.
I was drunk with the lust of his life.
The blood-drops oozed slow from his
head
And dabbled a chair. And our strife
Lasted one reeling second, his knife
Lay and winked in the lights overhead.

And the waltz from the ballroom I heard,
When I called him a low, sneaking cur.
And the wail of the violins stirred
My brute anger with visions of her.
As I throttled his windpipe, the purr
Of his breath with the waltz became
blurred.

I have ridden ten miles through the dark,
With that music, an infernal din,
Pounding rhythmic inside me. Just Hark!
One! Two! Three! And my fingers sink
in
To his flesh when the violins, thin
And straining with passion, grow stark.

One! Two! Three! Oh, the horror of
sound!
While she danced I was crushing his
throat.
He had tasted the joy of her, wound
Round her body, and I heard him gloat
On the favour. That instant I smote.
One! Two! Three! How the dancers swirl
round!

He is here in the room, in my arm,
His limp body hangs on the spin
Of the waltz we are dancing, a swarm
Of blood-drops is hemming us in!
Round and round! One! Two! Three!
And his sin
Is red like his tongue lolling warm.

One! Two! Three! And the drums are his
knell,
He is heavy, his feet beat the floor
As I drag him about in the swell
Of the waltz. With a menacing roar,
The trumpets crash in through the
door.
One! Two! Three! clangs his funeral bell.

One! Two! Three! In the chaos of space
Rolls the earth to the hideous glee
Of death! And so cramped is this place,
I stifle and pant. One! Two! Three!
Round and round! God! 'Tis he throttles
me!

He has covered my mouth with his face!
And his blood has dripped into my heart!
And my heart beats and labours. One!
Two!
Three! His dead limbs have coiled every
part
Of my body in tentacles. Through
My ears the waltz jangles. Like glue
His dead body holds me athwart.

One! Two! Three! Give me air! Oh! My
God!
One! Two! Three! I am drowning in
slime!
One! Two! Three! And his corpse, like a
clod,
Beats me into a jelly! The chime,
One! Two! Three! And his dead legs
keep time.
Air! Give me air! Air! My God!

CLEAR, WITH LIGHT VARIABLE WINDS

The fountain bent and straightened itself
In the night wind,
Blowing like a flower.
It gleamed and glittered,
A tall white lily,
Under the eye of the golden moon.
From a stone seat,
Beneath a blossoming lime,
The man watched it.
And the spray pattered
On the dim grass at his feet.

The fountain tossed its water,
Up and up, like silver marbles.
Is that an arm he sees?
And for one moment
Does he catch the moving curve
Of a thigh?
The fountain gurgled and splashed,
And the man's face was wet.

Is it singing that he hears?
A song of playing at ball?
The moonlight shines on the straight
column of water,

And through it he sees a woman,
Tossing the water-balls.
Her breasts point outwards,
And the nipples are like buds of peonies.
Her flanks ripple as she plays,
And the water is not more undulating
Than the lines of her body.

"Come," she sings, "Poet!
Am I not more worth than your day
ladies,
Covered with awkward stuffs,
Unreal, unbeautiful?
What do you fear in taking me?
Is not the night for poets?
I am your dream,
Recurrent as water,
Genned with the moon!"

She steps to the edge of the pool
And the water runs, rustling, down her
sides.
She stretches out her arms,
And the fountain streams behind her
Like an opened veil.

In the morning the gardeners came to
their work.
"There is something in the fountain,"
said one.
They shuddered as they laid their dead
master
On the grass.
"I will close his eyes," said the head
gardener,
"It is uncanny to see a dead man staring
at the sun."

THE BASKET

I

The inkstand is full of ink, and the
paper lies white and unspotted, in the
round light thrown by a candle. Puffs of
darkness sweep into the corners, and keep
rolling through the room behind his
chair. The air is silver and pearl, for the
night is liquid with moonlight.

See how the roof glitters, like ice!

Over there, a slice of yellow cuts into
the silver-blue, and beside it stand two
geraniums, purple because the light is
silver-blue, to-night.

See! She is coming, the young woman
with the bright hair. She swings a basket
as she walks, which she places on the sill,
between the geranium stalks. He laughs,
and crumples his paper as he leans for-
ward to look. "The Basket Filled with
Moonlight," what a title for a book!

The belying clouds swing over the
housetops.

He has forgotten the woman in the
room with the geraniums. He is beating
his brain, and in his ear-drums hammers
his heavy pulse. She sits on the window-
sill, with the basket in her lap. And tap!
She cracks a nut. And tap! Another.
Tap! Tap! Tap! The shells ricochet upon
the roof, and get into the gutters, and
bounce over the edge and disappear.

"It is very queer," thinks Peter, "the
basket was empty, I'm sure. How could
nuts appear from the atmosphere?"

The silver-blue moonlight makes the
geraniums purple, and the roof glitters
like ice.

II

Five o'clock. The geraniums are very
gay in their crimson array. The belying
clouds swing over the housetops, and
over the roofs goes Peter to pay his morn-
ing's work with a holiday.

"Annette, it is I. Have you finished?
Can I come?"

Peter jumps through the window.

"Dear, are you alone?"

"Look, Peter, the dome of the taber-
nacle is done. This gold thread is so very
high, I am glad it is morning, a starry
sky would have seen me bankrupt. Sit
down, now tell me, is your story going
well?"

The golden dome glittered in the
orange of the setting sun. On the walls,
at intervals, hung altar-cloths and chas-
ubles, and copes, and stoles, and coffin
palls. All stiff with rich embroidery, and
stitched with so much artistry, they seemed
like spun and woven gems, or flower-buds
new-opened on their stems.

Annette looked at the geraniums, very
red against the blue sky.

"No matter how I try, I cannot find
any thread of such a red. My bleeding

hearts drip stuff muddy in comparison. Heigh-ho! See my little pecking dove? I'm in love with my own temple. Only that halo's wrong. The colour's too strong, or not strong enough. I don't know. My eyes are tired. Oh, Peter, don't be so rough; it is valuable. I won't do any more. I promise. You tyrannise, Dear, that's enough. Now sit down and amuse me while I rest."

The shadows of the geraniums creep over the floor, and begin to climb the opposite wall.

Peter watches her, fluid with fatigue, floating, and drifting, and undulant in the orange glow. His senses flow towards her, where she lies supine and dreaming. Seeming drowned in a golden halo.

The pungent smell of the geraniums is hard to bear.

He pushes against her knees, and brushes his lips across her languid hands. His lips are hot and speechless. He woos her, quivering, and the room is filled with shadows, for the sun has set. But she only understands the ways of a needle through delicate stuffs, and the shock of one colour on another. She does not see that this is the same, and querulously murmurs his name.

"Peter, I don't want it. I am tired."

And he, the undesired, burns and is consumed.

There is a crescent moon on the rim of the sky.

III

"Go home, now, Peter. To-night is full moon. I must be alone."

"How soon the moon is full again! Annette, let me stay. Indeed, Dear Love, I shall not go away. My God, but you keep me starved! You write 'No Entrance Here,' over all the doors. Is it not strange, my Dear, that loving, yet you deny me entrance everywhere. Would marriage strike you blind, or, hating bonds as you do, why should I be denied the rights of loving if I leave you free? You want the whole of me, you pick my brains to rest you, but you give me not one heart-beat. Oh, forgive me, Sweet! I suffer in my

loving, and you know it. I cannot feed my life on being a poet. Let me stay."

"As you please, poor Peter, but it will hurt me if you do. It will crush your heart and squeeze the love out."

He answered gruffly, "I know what I'm about."

"Only remember one thing from to-night. My work is taxing and I must have sight! I MUST!"

The clear moon looks in between the geraniums. On the wall, the shadow of the man is divided from the shadow of the woman by a silver thread.

They are eyes, hundreds of eyes, round like marbles! Unwinking, for there are no lids. Blue, black, gray, and hazel, and the irises are cased in the whites, and they glitter and spark under the moon. The basket is heaped with human eyes. She cracks off the whites and throws them away. They ricochet upon the roof, and get into the gutters, and bounce over the edge and disappear. But she is here, quietly sitting on the window-sill, eating human eyes.

The silver-blue moonlight makes the geraniums purple, and the roof shines like ice.

IV

How hot the sheets are! His skin is tormented with pricks, and over him sticks, and never moves, an eye. It lights the sky with blood, and drips blood. And the drops sizzle on his bare skin, and he smells them burning in, and branding his body with the name "Annette."

The blood-red sky is outside his window now. Is it blood or fire? Merciful God! Fire! And his heart wrenches and pounds "Annette!"

The lead of the roof is scorching, he ricochets, gets to the edge, bounces over and disappears.

The belling clouds are red as they swing over the housetops.

V

The air is of silver and pearl, for the night is liquid with moonlight. How the ruin glistens, like a palace of ice! Only two black holes swallow the brilliance of

the moon. Deflowered windows, sockets without sight.

A man stands before the house. He sees the silver-blue moonlight, and set in it, over his head, staring and flickering, eyes of geranium red.

Annettel

IN A CASTLE

I

Over the yawning chimney hangs the fog. Drip — hiss — drip — hiss — fall the raindrops on the oaken log which burns, and steams, and smokes the ceiling beams. Drip — hiss — the rain never stops.

The wide, state bed shivers beneath its velvet coverlet. Above, dim, in the smoke, a tarnished coronet gleams dully. Overhead hammers and chinks the rain. Fearfully wails the wind down distant corridors, and there comes the swish and sigh of rushes lifted off the floors. The arras blows sidewise out from the wall, and then falls back again.

It is my lady's key, confided with much nice cunning, whisperingly. He enters on a sob of wind, which gutters the candles almost to swaling. The fire flutters and drops. Drip — hiss — the rain never stops. He shuts the door. The rushes fall again to stillness along the floor. Outside, the wind goes wailing.

The velvet coverlet of the wide bed is smooth and cold. Above, in the firelight, winks the coronet of tarnished gold. The knight shivers in his coat of fur, and holds out his hands to the withering flame. She is always the same, a sweet coquette. He will wait for her.

How the log hisses and drips! How warm and satisfying will be her lips!

It is wide and cold, the state bed; but when her head lies under the coronet, and her eyes are full and wet with love, and the velvet counterpane half slips from her, and alarms her trembling modesty, how

eagerly he will leap to cover her, and blot himself beneath the quilt, making her laugh and tremble.

Is it guilt to free a lady from her palsied lord, absent and fighting, terribly abhorred?

He stirs a bootied heel and kicks a rolling coal. His spur clinks on the hearth. Overhead, the rain hammers and chinks. *She is so pure and whole. Only because he has her soul will she resign herself to him, for where the soul has gone, the body must be given as a sign.* He takes her by the divine right of the only lover. He has sworn to fight her lord, and wed her after. Should he be overborne, she will die adoring him, forlorn, shriven by her great love.

Above, the coronet winks in the darkness. Drip — hiss — fall the raindrops. The arras blows out from the wall, and a door bangs in a far-off hall.

The candles swale. In the gale the moat below plunges and spatters. Will the lady lose courage and not come?

The rain claps on a loosened rafter. Is that laughter?

The room is filled with lips and whispers. Something mutters. One candle drowns and the other gutters. Is that the rain which pads and patters, is it the wind through the winding entries which chatters?

The state bed is very cold and he is alone. How far from the wall the arras is blown!

Christ's Death! It is no storm which makes these little chuckling sounds. By the Great Wounds of Holy Jesus, it is his dear lady, kissing and clasping someone! Through the sobbing storm he hears her love take form and flutter out in words. They prick into his ears and stun his desire, which lies within him, hard and dead, like frozen fire. And the little noise never stops.

Drip — hiss — the rain drops.

He tears down the arras from before an inner chamber's bolted door.

II

The state bed shivers in the watery dawn. Drip — hiss — fall the raindrops. For the storm never stops.

On the velvet coverlet lie two bodies, stripped and fair in the cold, grey air. Drip — hiss — fall the blood-drops, for the bleeding never stops. The bodies lie quietly. At each side of the bed, on the floor, is a head. A man's on this side, a woman's on that, and the red blood oozes along the rush mat.

A wisp of paper is twisted carefully into the strands of the dead man's hair. It says, "My Lord: Your wife's paramour has paid with his life for the high favour."

Through the lady's silver fillet is wound another paper. It reads, "Most noble Lord: Your wife's misdeeds are as a double-stranded necklace of beads. But I have engaged that, on your return, she shall welcome you here. She will not spurn your love as before, you have still the best part of her. Her blood was red, her body white, they will both be here for your delight. The soul inside was a lump of dirt, I have rid you of that with a spurt of my sword point. Good luck to your pleasure. She will be quite com-pleasant, my friend, I wager." The end was a splashed flourish of ink.

Hark! In the passage is heard the clink of armour, the tread of a heavy man. The door bursts open and standing there, his thin hair wavering in the glare of steely daylight, is my Lord of Clair.

Over the yawning chimney hangs the fog. Drip — hiss — drip — hiss — fall the raindrops. Overhead hammers and chinks the rain which never stops.

The velvet coverlet is sodden and wet, yet the roof beams are tight. Overhead, the coronet gleams with its blackened gold, winking and blinking. Among the rushes three corpses are growing cold.

III

In the castle church you may see them stand,

Two sumptuous tombs on either hand
Of the choir, my Lord's and my Lady's,
grand

In sculptured filigrees. And where the transepts of the church expand,
A crusader, come from the Holy Land,
Lies with crossed legs and embroidered band.

The page's name became a brand
For shame. He was buried in crawling sand,
After having been burnt by royal command.

THE BOOK OF HOURS OF SISTER CLOTILDE

The Bell in the convent tower swung,
High overhead the great sun hung,
A navet for the curving sky.
The air was a blue clarity.
Swallows flew,
And a cock crew.

The iron clanging sank through the light air,
Rustled over with blowing branches. A flare
Of spotted green, and a snake had gone
Into the bed where the snowdrops shone
In green new-started,
Their white bells parted.

Two by two, in a long brown line,
The nuns were walking to breathe the fine
Bright April air. They must go in soon
And work at their tasks all the afternoon.
But this time is theirs!
They walk in pairs.

First comes the Abbess, preoccupied
And slow, as a woman often tried,
With her temper in bond. Then the
oldest nun.
Then younger and younger, until the last
one
Has a laugh on her lips,
And fairly skips.

'They wind about the gravel walks
And all the long line buzzes and talks.
They step in time to the ringing bell,
With scarcely a shadow. The sun is well
In the core of a sky
Domed silverly.

Sister Margu  rite said: "The pears will
soon bud."

Sister Angélique said she must get her
spud
And free the earth round the jasmine
roots.

Sister Véronique said: "Oh, look at those
shoots!
There's a crocus up,
With a purple cup."

But Sister Clotilde said nothing at all,
She looked up and down the old grey wall
To see if a lizard were basking there.
She looked across the garden to where
A sycamore
Planked the garden door.

She was restless, although her little feet
danced,
And quite unsatisfied, for it chanced
Her morning's work had hung in her mind
And would not take form. She could not
find
The beautifulness
For the Virgin's dress.

Should it be of pink, or damasked blue?
Or perhaps lilac with gold shotted
through?
Should it be banded with yellow and
white
Roses, or sparked like a frosty night?
Or a crimson sheen
Over some sort of green?

But Clotilde's eyes saw nothing new
In all the garden, no single hue
So lovely or so marvellous
That its use would not seem impious.
So on she walked,
And the others talked.

Sister Elisabeth edged away
From what her companion had to say,
For Sister Marthe saw the world in little,
She weighed every grain and recorded each
tittle.
She did plain stitching
And worked in the kitchen.

"Sister Radegonde knows the apples won't
last,
I told her so this Friday past.
I must speak to her before Compline."
Her words were like dust motes in slant-
ing sunshine.

The other nun sighed,
With her pleasure quite dried.

Suddenly Sister Berthe cried out:
"The snowdrops are blooming!" They
turned about.
The little white cups bent over the
ground,
And in among the light stems wound
A crested snake,
With his eyes awake.

His body was green with a metal bright-
ness
Like an emerald set in a kind of whiteness,
And all down his curling length were disks,
Evil vermilion asterisks,
They paled and flooded
As wounds fresh-blooded.

His crest was amber glittered with blue,
And opaque so the sun came shining
through.
It seemed a crown with fiery points.
When he quivered all down his scaly
joints,
From every slot
The sparkles shot.

The nuns huddled tightly together, fear
Catching their senses. But Clotilde must
peer
More closely at the beautiful snake,
She seemed entranced and eased. Could
she make
Colours so rare,
The dress were there.

The Abbess shook off her lethargy.
"Sisters, we will walk on," said she.
Sidling away from the snowdrop bed,
The line curved forwards, the Abbess
ahead.
Only Clotilde
Was the last to yield.

When the recreation hour was done
Each went in to her task. Alone
In the library, with its great north light,
Clotilde wrought at an exquisite
Wreath of flowers
For her Book of Hours.

She twined the little crocus blooms
With snowdrops and daffodils, the glooms

Of laurel leaves were interwoven
 With Stars-of-Bethlehem, and cloven
 Fritillaries,
 Whose colour varies.

They framed the picture she had made,
 Half-delighted and half-afraid.
 In a courtyard with a lozenge floor
 The Virgin watched, and through the
 arched door
 The angel came
 Like a springing flame.

His wings were dipped in violet fire,
 His limbs were strung to holy desire.
 He lowered his head and passed under
 the arch,
 And the air seemed beating a solemn
 march.
 The Virgin waited
 With eyes dilated.

Her face was quiet and innocent,
 And beautiful with her strange assent.
 A silver thread about her head
 Her halo was poised. But in the stead
 Of her gown, there remained
 The vellum, unstained.

Clotilde painted the flowers patiently,
 Lingering over each tint and dye.
 She could spend great pains, now she had
 seen
 That curious, unimagined green.
 A colour so strange
 It had seemed to change.

She thought it had altered while she
 gazed.
 At first it had been simple green; then
 glazed
 All over with twisting flames, each spot
 A molten colour, trembling and hot,
 And every eye
 Seemed to liquefy.

She had made a plan, and her spirits
 danced.
 After all, she had only glanced
 At that wonderful snake, and she must
 know
 Just what hues made the creature throw
 Those splashes and sprays
 Of prised rays.

When evening prayers were sung and
 said,
 The nuns lit their tapers and went to bed.
 And soon in the convent there was no
 light,
 For the moon did not rise until late that
 night,
 Only the shine
 Of the lamp at the shrine.

Clotilde lay still in her trembling sheets.
 Her heart shook her body with its beats.
 She could not see till the moon should
 rise,
 So she whispered prayers and kept her
 eyes
 On the window-square
 Till light should be there.

The faintest shadow of a branch
 Fell on the floor. Clotilde, grown staunch
 With solemn purpose, softly rose
 And fluttered down between the rows
 Of sleeping nuns.
 She almost runs.

She must go out through the little side
 door
 Lest the nuns who were always praying
 before
 The Virgin's altar should hear her pass.
 She pushed the bolts, and over the grass
 The red moon's brim
 Mounted its rim.

Her shadow crept up the convent wall
 As she swiftly left it, over all
 The garden lay the level glow
 Of a moon coming up, very big and slow.
 The gravel glistened.
 She stopped and listened.

It was still, and the moonlight was getting
 clearer.
 She laughed a little, but she felt queerer
 Than ever before. The snowdrop bed
 Was reached and she bent down her
 head.
 On the striped ground
 The snake was wound.

For a moment Clotilde paused in alarm,
 Then she rolled up her sleeve and
 stretched out her arm.

She thought she heard steps, she must be quick.

She darted her hand out, and seized the thick
Wriggling slime,
Only just in time.

The old gardener came muttering down the path,
And his shadow fell like a broad, black swath,

And covered Clotilde and the angry snake.

He bit her, but what difference did that make!
The Virgin should dress
In his loveliness.

The gardener was covering his new-set plants
For the night was chilly, and nothing daunts

Your lover of growing things. He spied
Something to do and turned aside,
And the moonlight streamed
On Clotilde, and gleamed.

His business finished the gardener rose.
He shook and swore, for the moonlight shows

A girl with a fire-tongued serpent, she
Grasping him, laughing, while quietly
Her cyes are weeping.
Is he sleeping?

He thinks it is some holy vision,
Brushes that aside and with decision
Jumps—and hits the snake with his stick,

Crushes his spine, and then with quick,
Urgent command
Takes her hand.

The gardener sucks the poison and spits,
Cursing and praying as befits
A poor old man half out of his wits.
"Whatever possessed you, Sister, it's
Hatched of a devil
And very evil.

It's one of them horrid basilisks
You read about. They say a man risks
His life to touch it, but I guess I've
sucked it
Out by now. Lucky I chucked it

Away from you.
I guess you'll do."

"Oh, no, François, this beautiful beast
Was sent to me, to me the least
Worthy in all our convent, so I
Could finish my picture of the Most High
And Holy Queen,
In her dress of green.

He is dead now, but his colours won't
fade

At once, and by noon I shall have made
The Virgin's robe. Oh, François, see
How kindly the moon shines down on
me!

I can't die yet,
For the task was set."

"You won't die now, for I've sucked it
away,"

Grumbled old François, "so have your
play.

If the Virgin is set on snake's colours so
strong,—"

"François, don't say things like that, it
is wrong."

So Clotilde vented
Her creed. He repented.

"He can't do no more harm, Sister," said
he.

"Paint as much as you like." And gingerly
He picked up the snake with his stick.
Clotilde

Thanked him, and begged that he would
shield

Her secret, though itching
To talk in the kitchen.

The gardener promised, not very pleased,
And Clotilde, with the strain of adventure
eased,

Walked quickly home, while the half-high
moon

Made her beautiful snake-skin sparkle,
and soon

In her bed she lay
And waited for day.

At dawn's first saffron-spiced warning
Clotilde was up. And all that morning,
Except when she went to the chapel to
pray,

She painted, and when the April day

Was hot with sun,
Clotilde had done.

Done! She drooped, though her heart
beat loud
At the beauty before her, and her spirit
bowed
To the Virgin her finely-touched thought
had made.
A lady, in excellence arrayed,
And wonder-souled,
Christ's Blessed Mould!

From long fasting Clotilde felt weary and
faint,
But her eyes were starred like those of a
saint
Enmeshed in Heaven's beatitude.
A sudden clamour hurled its rude
Force to break
Her vision awake.

The door nearly leapt from its hinges,
pushed
By the multitude of nuns. They hushed
When they saw Clotilde, in perfect quiet,
Smiling, a little perplexed at the riot.
And all the hive
Buzzed "She's alive!"

Old François had told. He had found the
strain
Of silence too great, and preferred the
pain
Of a conscience outraged. The news had
spread,
And all were convinced Clotilde must be
dead.
For François, to spite them,
Had not seen fit to right them.

The Abbess, unwontedly trembling and
mild,
Put her arms round Clotilde and wept,
"My child,
Has the Holy Mother showed you this
grace,
To spare you while you imaged her face?
How could we have guessed
Our convent so blessed!

A miracle! But Oh! My Lamb!
To have you die! And I, who am
A hollow, living shell, the grave
Is empty of me. Holy Mary, I crave

To be taken, Dear Mother,
Instead of this other."

She dropped on her knees and silently
prayed,
With anguished hands and tears delayed
To a painful slowness. The minutes drew
To fractions. Then the west wind blew
The sound of a bell,
On a gusty swell.

It came skipping over the slates of the
roof,
And the bright bell-notes seemed a re-
proof
To grief, in the eye of so fair a day.
The Abbess, comforted, ceased to pray.
And the sun lit the flowers
In Clotilde's Book of Hours.

It glistened the green of the Virgin's dress
And made the red spots, in a flushed
excess,
Pulse and start; and the violet wings
Of the angel were colour which shines
and sings.
The book seemed a choir
Of rainbow fire.

The Abbess crossed herself, and each nun
Did the same, then one by one,
They filed to the chapel, that incensed
prayers
Might plead for the life of this sister of
theirs.
Clotilde, the Inspired!

She only felt tired.

The old chronicles say she did not die
Until heavy with years. And that is why
There hangs in the convent church a
basket
Of osiered silver, a holy casket,
And treasured therein
A dried snake-skin.

THE EXETER ROAD

Panels of claret and blue which shine
Under the moon like lees of wine.
A coronet done in a golden scroll,
And wheels which blunder and creak as
they roll

Through the muddy ruts of a moorland
track.

They daren't look back!

'They are whipping and cursing the horses.
Lord!

What brutes men are when they think
they're scored.

Behind, my bay gelding gallops with me,
In a steaming sweat, it is fine to see
That coach, all claret, and gold, and blue,
Hop about and slue.

'They are scared half out of their wits,
poor souls.

For my lord has a casket full of rolls
Of minted sovereigns, and silver bars.
I laugh to think how he'll show his scars
In London to-morrow. He whines with
rage
In his varnished cage.

My lady has shoved her rings over her
tocs.

'Tis an ancient trick every night-rider
knows.

But I shall relieve her of them yet,
When I see she limps in the minuet
I must beg to celebrate this night,
And the green moonlight.

'There's nothing to hurry about, the plain
Is hours long, and the mud's a strain.
My gelding's uncommonly strong in the
loins,

In half an hour I'll bag the coins.

'Tis a clear, sweet night on the turn of
Spring.

The chase is the thing!

How the coach flashes and wobbles, the
moon

Dripping down so quietly on it. A tune
Is beating out of the curses and screams,
And the cracking all through the painted
seams.

Steady, old horse, we'll keep it in sight.

'Tis a rare fine night!

'There's a clump of trees on the dip of the
down,

And the sky shimmers where it hangs
over the town.

It seems a shame to break the air
In two with this pistol, but I've my share

Of drudgery like other men.

His hat? Amen!

Hold up, you beast, now what the devil!
Confound this moor for a pockholed, evil,
Rotten marsh. My right leg's snapped.

'Tis a mercy he's rolled, but I'm nicely
capped.

A broken-legged man and a broken-legged
horse!

They'll get me, of course.

The cursed coach will reach the town
And they'll all come out, every loafer
grown

A lion to handcuff a man that's down.
What's that? Oh, the coachman's bul-
leted hat!

I'll give it a head to fit it pat.

Thank you! No cravat.

*They handcuffed the body just for style,
And they hung him in chains for the
volatile*

*Wind to scour him flesh from bones.
Way out on the moor you can hear the
the groans*

His gibbet makes when it blows a gale.

'Tis a common tale.

THE SHADOW

Paul Jannes was working very late,
For this watch must be done by eight
'To-morrow or the Cardinal

Would certainly be vexed. Of all

His customers the old prelate

Was the most important, for his state

Descended to his watches and rings,

And he gave his mistresses many things

To make them forget his age and smile
When he paid his visits, and they could
while

The time away with a diamond locket
Exceedingly well. So they picked his
pocket,

And he paid in jewels for his slobbering
kisses.

This watch was made to buy him blisses
From an Austrian countess on her way
Home, and she meant to start next day.
Paul worked by the pointed, tulip flame
Of a tallow candle, and became

So absorbed, that his old clock made him
wince

Striking the hour a moment since.
 Its echo, only half apprehended,
 Lingered about the room. He ended
 Screwing the little rubies in,
 Setting the wheels to lock and spin,
 Curling the infinitesimal springs,
 Fixing the filigree hands. Chippings
 Of precious stones lay strewn about.
 The table before him was a rout
 Of splashes and sparks of coloured light.
 There was yellow gold in sheets, and
 quite
 A heap of emeralds, and steel.
 Here was a gem, there was a wheel.
 And glasses lay like limpid lakes
 Shining and still, and there were flakes
 Of silver, and shavings of pearl,
 And little wires all awlirl
 With the light of the candle. He took
 the watch
 And wound its hands about to match
 The time, then glanced up to take the
 hour
 From the hanging clock.

Good, Merciful Power!
 How came that shadow on the wall,
 No woman was in the room! His tall
 Chiffonier stood gaunt behind
 His chair. His old cloak, rabbit-lined,
 Hung from a peg. The door was closed.
 Just for a moment he must have dozed.
 He looked again, and saw it plain.
 The silhouette made a blue-black stain
 On the opposite wall, and it never
 wavered
 Even when the candle quavered
 Under his panting breath. What made
 That beautiful, dreadful thing, that shade
 Of something so lovely, so exquisite,
 Cast from a substance which the sight
 Had not been tutored to perceive?
 Paul brushed his eyes across his sleeve.

Clear-cut, the Shadow on the wall
 Gleamed black, and never moved at all.

Paul's watches were like amulets,
 Wrought into patterns and rosettes;
 The cases were all set with stones,
 And wreathing lines, and shining zones.
 He knew the beauty in a curve,
 And the Shadow tortured every nerve
 With its perfect rhythm of outline
 Cutting the whitewashed wall. So fine
 Was the neck he knew he could have
 spanned

It about with the fingers of one hand.
 The chin rose to a mouth he guessed,
 But could not see, the lips were pressed
 Loosely together, the edges close,
 And the proud and delicate line of the
 nose
 Melted into a brow, and there
 Broke into undulant waves of hair.
 The lady was edged with the stamp of
 race.
 A singular vision in such a place.

He moved the candle to the tall
 Chiffonier; the Shadow stayed on the
 wall.
 He threw his cloak upon a chair,
 And still the lady's face was there.
 From every corner of the room
 He saw, in the patch of light, the gloom
 That was the lady. Her violet bloom
 Was almost brighter than that which
 came
 From his candle's tulip-flame.
 He set the filigree hands; he laid
 The watch in the case which he had
 made;
 He put on his rabbit cloak, and snuffed
 His candle out. The room seemed stuffed
 With darkness. Softly he crossed the
 floor,
 And let himself out through the door.

The sun was flashing from every pin
 And wheel, when Paul let himself in.
 The whitewashed walls were hot with
 light.

The room was the core of chrysolite,
 Burning and simmering with fiery might.
 The sun was so bright that no shadow
 could fall

From the furniture upon the wall.
 Paul sighed as he looked at the empty
 space

Where a glare usurped the lady's place.
 He settled himself to his work, but his
 mind

Wandered, and he would wake to find
 His hand suspended, his eyes grown dim,
 And nothing advanced beyond the rim
 Of his dreaming. The Cardinal sent to
 pay

For his watch, which had purchased so
 fine a day.

But Paul could hardly touch the gold,
 It seemed the price of his Shadow, sold.

One morning he threw the street door
wide

On coming in, and his vigorous stride
Made the tools on his table rattle and
jump.

In his hands he carried a new-burst clump
Of laurel blossoms, whose smooth-barked
stalks

Were pliant with sap. As a husband talks
To the wife he left an hour ago,
Paul spoke to the Shadow. "Dear, you
know

To-day the calendar calls it Spring,
And I woke this morning gathering
Asphodels, in my dreams, for you.

So I rushed out to see what flowers blew
Their pink-and-purple-scented souls
Across the town-wind's dusty scrolls,
And made the approach to the Market
Square

A garden with smells and sunny air.
I feel so well and happy to-day,
I think I shall take a Holiday.
And to-night we will have a little treat.
I am going to bring you something to
eat!"

He looked at the Shadow anxiously.
It was quite grave and silent. He
Shut the outer door and came
And leant against the window-frame.
"Dearest," he said, "we live apart
Although I bear you in my heart.
We look out each from a different world.
At any moment we may be hurled
Asunder. They follow their orbits, we
Obey their laws entirely.
Now you must come, or I go there,
Unless we are willing to live the flare
Of a lighted instant and have it gone."

A bee in the laurels began to drone.
A loosened petal fluttered prone.

"Man grows by eating, if you eat
You will be filled with our life, sweet
Will be our planet in your mouth.
If not, I must parch in death's wide
drouth

Until I gain to where you are,
And give you myself in whatever star
May happen. O You Beloved of Me!
Is it not ordered cleverly?"
The Shadow, bloomed like a plum, and
clear,

Hung in the sunlight. It did not hear.

Paul slipped away as the dusk began
To dim the little shop. He ran
To the nearest inn, and chose with care
As much as his thin purse could bear,
As rapt-souled monks watch over the
baking

Of the sacred wafer, and through the
making

Of the holy wine whisper secret prayers
That God will bless this labour of theirs;
So Paul, in a sober ecstasy,
Purchased the best which he could buy.
Returning, he brushed his tools aside,
And laid across the table a wide
Napkin. He put a glass and plate
On either side, in duplicate.

Over the lady's, excellent
With loveliness, the laurels bent.
In the centre the white-flaked pastry
stood,

And beside it the wine flask. Red as
blood

Was the wine which should bring the
lusthood

Of human life to his lady's veins.
When all was ready, all which pertains
To a simple meal was there, with eyes
Lit by the joy of his great emprise,
He reverently bade her come,
And forsake for him her distant home.
He put meat on her plate and filled her
glass,

And waited what should come to pass.

The Shadow lay quietly on the wall.
From the street outside came a watch-
man's call:

"A cloudy night. Rain beginning to fall."

And still he waited. The clock's slow tick
Knocked on the silence. Paul turned sick.
He filled his own glass full of wine;
From his pocket he took a paper. The
twine

Was knotted, and he searched a knife
From his jumbled tools. The cord of life
Snapped as he cut the little string.
He knew that he must do the thing
He feared. He shook powder into the
wine,

And holding it up so the candle's shine
Sparked a ruby through its heart,
He drank it. "Dear, never apart
Again! You have said it was mine to do.
It is done, and I am come to you!"

Paul Jannes let the empty wine-glass fall,
 And held out his arms. The insentient
 wall
 Stared down at him with its cold, white
 glare
 Unstained! The Shadow was not there!
 Paul clutched and tore at his tightening
 throat.
 He felt the veins in his body bloat,
 And the hot blood run like fire and
 stones
 Along the sides of his cracking bones.
 But he laughed as he staggered towards
 the door,
 And he laughed aloud as he sank on the
 floor.

The Coroner took the body away,
 And the watches were sold that Saturday.
 The Auctioneer said one could seldom
 buy
 Such watches, and the prices were high.

THE FORSAKEN

Holy Mother of God, Merciful Mary.
 Hear me! I am very weary. I have come
 from a village miles away, all day I have
 been coming, and I ache for such far
 roaming. I cannot walk as light as I
 used, and my thoughts grow confused. I
 am heavier than I was. Mary Mother,
 you know the cause!

Beautiful Holy Lady, take my shame
 away from me! Let this fear be only
 seeming, let it be that I am dreaming.
 For months I have hoped it was so, now
 I am afraid I know. Lady, why should
 this be shame, just because I haven't got
 his name. He loved me, yes, Lady, he
 did, and he couldn't keep it hid. We
 meant to marry. Why did he die?

That day when they told me he had
 gone down in the avalanche, and could
 not be found until the snow melted in
 Spring, I did nothing. I could not cry.
 Why should he die? Why should he die
 and his child live? His little child alive
 in me, for my comfort. No, Good God,
 for my misery! I cannot face the shame,
 to be a mother, and not married, and the
 poor child to be reviled for having no
 father. Merciful Mother, Holy Virgin,

take away this sin I did. Let the baby
 not be. Only take the stigma off of me!

I have told no one but you, Holy Mary.
 My mother would call me "whore," and
 spit upon me; the priest would have me
 repent, and have the rest of my life spent
 in a convent. I am no whore, no bad
 woman, he loved me, and we were to be
 married. I carried him always in my
 heart, what did it matter if I gave him
 the least part of me too? You were a
 virgin, Holy Mother, but you had a son,
 you know there are times when a woman
 must give all. There is some call to give
 and hold back nothing. I swear I obeyed
 God then, and this child who lives in me
 is the sign. What am I saying? He is
 dead, my beautiful, strong man! I shall
 never feel him caress me again. This is
 the only baby I shall have. Oh, Holy
 Virgin, protect my baby! My little, help-
 less baby!

He will look like his father, and he
 will be as fast a runner and as good a
 shot. Not that he shall be no scholar
 neither. He shall go to school in winter,
 and learn to read and write, and my
 father will teach him to carve, so that he
 can make the little horses, and cows, and
 chamois, out of white wood. Oh, No!
 No! No! How can I think such things,
 I am not good. My father will have
 nothing to do with my boy, I shall be
 an outcast thing. Oh, Mother of our
 Lord God, be merciful, take away my
 shame! Let my body be as it was before
 he came. No little baby for me to keep
 underneath my heart for those long
 months. To live for and to get comfort
 from. I cannot go home and tell my
 mother. She is so hard and righteous. She
 never loved my father, and we were born
 for duty, not for love. I cannot face it.
 Holy Mother, take my baby away! Take
 away my little baby! I don't want it, I
 can't bear it!

And I shall have nothing, nothing! Just
 be known as a good girl. Have other men
 want to marry me, whom I could not
 touch, after having known my man.
 Known the length and breadth of his
 beautiful white body, and the depth of

his love, on the high Summer Alp, with the moon above, and the pine-needles all shiny in the light of it. He is gone, my man, I shall never hear him or feel him again, but I could not touch another. I would rather lie under the snow with my own man in my arms!

So I shall live on and on. Just a good woman. With nothing to warm my heart where he lay, and where he left his baby for me to care for. I shall not be quite human, I think. Merely a stone-dead creature. They will respect me. What do I care for respect! You didn't care for people's tongues when you were carrying our Lord Jesus. God had my man give me my baby, when He knew that He was going to take him away. His lips will comfort me, his hands will soothe me. All day I will work at my lace-making and all night I will keep him warm by my side and pray the blessed Angels to cover him with their wings. Dear Mother, what is it that sings? I hear voices singing, and lovely silver trumpets through it all. They seem just on the other side of the wall. Let me keep my baby, Holy Mother. He is only a poor lace-maker's baby, with a stain upon him, but give me strength to bring him up to be a man.

LATE SEPTEMBER ✓

Tang of fruitage in the air;
Red boughs bursting everywhere;
Shimmering of seeded grass;
Hooded gentians all a'mass.

✓ Warmth of earth, and cloudless wind
Tearing off the husky rind,
Blowing feathered seeds to fall
By the sun-baked, sheltering wall.

Beech trees in a golden haze;
Hardy sumachs all ablaze,
Glowing through the silver birches.
How that pine tree shouts and lurches!

From the sunny door-jamb high,
Swings the shell of a butterfly.
Scrape of insect violins
Through the stubble shrilly dins.

Every blade's a minaret
Where a small muezzin's set,

Loudly calling us to pray
At the miracle of day.

Then the purple-lidded night
Westering comes, her footsteps light
Guided by the radiant boon
Of a sickle-shaped new moon.

THE PIKE

In the brown water,
Thick and silver-sheened in the sunshine,
Liquid and cool in the shade of the reeds,
A pike dozed.
Lost among the shadows of stems
He lay unnoticed.
Suddenly he flicked his tail,
And a green-and-copper brightness
Ran under the water.

Out from under the reeds
Came the olive-green light,
And orange flashed up
Through the sun-thickened water.
So the fish passed across the pool,
Green and copper,
A darkness and a gleam,
And the blurred reflections of the willows
on the opposite bank
Received it.

THE BLUE SCARF

Pale, with the blue of high zeniths, shimmered over the silver, brocaded
In smooth, running patterns, a soft stuff,
with dark knotted fringes, it lies there,
Warm from a woman's soft shoulders,
and my fingers close on it, caressing.
Where is she, the woman who wore it?
The scent of her fingers and drugs mel
A languor, fire-shotted, runs through me,
and I crush the scarf down on my face,
And gulp in the warmth and the blueness,
and my eyes swim in cool-tinted heavens.
Around me are columns of marble, and
a diapered, sun-flickered pavement.
Rose-leaves blow and patter against it.
Below the stone steps a lute tinkles.
A jar of green jade throws its shadow
half over the floor. A big-bellied
Frog hops through the sunlight and plops
in the gold-bubbled water of a basin,

Sunk in the black and white marble. The
 west wind has lifted a scarf
 On the seat close beside me, the blue of
 it is a violent outrage of colour.
 She draws it more closely about her, and
 it ripples beneath her slight stirring.
 Her kisses are sharp buds of fire; and I
 burn back against her, a jewel
 Hard and white; a stalked, flaming flower;
 till I break to a handful of cinders,
 And open my eyes to the scarf, shining
 blue in the afternoon sunshine.

How loud clocks can tick when a room
 is empty, and one is alone!

WHITE AND GREEN

Hey! My daffodil-crowned,
 Slim and without sandals!
 As the sudden spurt of flame upon darkness
 So my eyeballs are startled with you,
 Supple-limbed youth among the fruit-
 trees,
 Light runner through tasselled orchards.
 You are an almond flower unsheathed
 Leaping and flickering between the
 budded branches.

AUBADE

As I would free the white almond from
 the green husk
 So would I strip your trappings off,
 Beloved.
 And fingering the smooth and polished
 kernel
 I should see that in my hands glittered a
 gem beyond counting.

MUSIC

The neighbour sits in his window and
 plays the flute.
 From my bed I can hear him,
 And the round notes flutter and tap about
 the room,
 And hit against each other,
 Blurring to unexpected chords.
 It is very beautiful,
 With the little flute-notes all about me,
 In the darkness.

In the daytime,
 The neighbour eats bread and onions with
 one hand
 And copies music with the other.

He is fat and has a bald head,
 So I do not look at him,
 But run quickly past his window.
 There is always the sky to look at,
 Or the water in the well!

But when night comes and he plays his
 flute,
 I think of him as a young man,
 With gold seals hanging from his watch,
 And a blue coat with silver buttons.
 As I lie in my bed
 The flute-notes push against my ears and
 lips,
 And I go to sleep, dreaming.

A LADY

You are beautiful and faded
 Like an old opera tune
 Played upon a harpsichord;
 Or like the sun-flooded silks
 Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.
 In your eyes
 Smoulder the fallen roses of out-lived
 minutes,
 And the perfume of your soul
 Is vague and suffusing,
 With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
 Your half-tones delight me,
 And I grow mad with gazing
 At your blent colours.

My vigour is a new-minted penny,
 Which I cast at your feet.
 Gather it up from the dust,
 That its sparkle may amuse you.

IN A GARDEN

Gushing from the mouths of stone men
 To spread at ease under the sky
 In granite-lipped basins,
 Where iris dabble their feet
 And rustle to a passing wind,
 The water fills the garden with its rush-
 ing,
 In the midst of the quiet of close-clipped
 lawns.

Damp smell the ferns in tunnels of stone,
 Where trickle and plash the fountains,
 Marble fountains, yellowed with much
 water.

Splashing down moss-tarnished steps
 It falls, the water;

And the air is throbbing with it.
 With its gurgling and running.
 With its leaping, and deep, cool murmur.

And I wished for night and you.
 I wanted to see you in the swimming-
 pool,
 White and shining in the silver-flecked
 water.
 While the moon rode over the garden,
 High in the arch of night,
 And the scent of the lilacs was heavy with
 stillness.

Night, and the water, and you in your
 whiteness, bathing!

A TULIP GARDEN ✓

Guarded within the old red wall's em-
 brace,
 Marshalled like soldiers in gay company,

The tulips stand arrayed. Here in-
 fantry
 Wheels out into the sunlight. What bold
 grace

Sets off their tunics, white with crimson
 lace!

Here are platoons of gold-frocked
 cavalry,

With scarlet sabres tossing in the eye
 Of purple batteries, every gun in place.

Forward they come, with flaunting
 colours spread,

With torches burning, stepping out in
 time

To some quick, unheard march. Our
 ears are dead,

We cannot catch the tune. In panto-
 mime

Parades that army. With our utmost
 powers

We hear the wind stream through a
 bed of flowers.

MEN, WOMEN AND GHOSTS

FIGURINES IN OLD SAXE

PATTERNS

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown,
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned
shoes.

Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime-tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon
my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden-paths.
The dripping never stops.
Undemeath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a
marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!

I should like to see it lying in a heap
upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on
the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran
along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his
sword-hilt and buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the pat-
terned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-
booted lover.
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised
my body as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the
sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon —
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Undemeath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a
rider from the Duke.
"Madam, we regret to inform you that
Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday se'nnight."
As I read it in the white, morning sun-
light,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some re-
freshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.

The blue and yellow flowers stood up
proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked.
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my
husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broken the pattern;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have
said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to
asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be
guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is
dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

PICKTHORN MANOR

I

How fresh the Dartle's little waves that
day!
A steely silver, underlined with blue,
And flashing where the round clouds,
blown away,
Let drop the yellow sunshine to gleam
through
And tip the edges of the waves with
shifts

And spots of whitest fire, hard like
gems
Cut from the midnight moons they
were, and sharp
As wind through leafless stems.
The Lady Eunice walked between the
drifts
Of blooming cherry-trees, and watched
the rifts
Of clouds drawn through the
river's azure warp.

II

Her little feet tapped softly down the
path.
Her soul was listless; even the morning
breeze
Fluttering the trees and strewing a light
swath
Of fallen petals on the grass, could
please
Her not at all. She brushed a hair aside
With a swift move, and a half-angry
frown.
She stopped to pull a daffodil or
two,
And held them to her gown
To test the colours; put them at her
side,
Then at her breast, and loosened them
and tried
Some new arrangement, but it
would not do.

III

A lady in a Manor-house, alone,
Whose husband is in Flanders with
the Duke
Of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, she's
grown
Too apathetic even to rebuke
Her idleness. What is she on this Earth?
No woman surely, since she neither
can
Be wed nor single, must not let her
mind
Build thoughts upon a man
Except for hers. Indeed that were no
dearth
Were her Lord here, for well she knew
his worth,
And when she thought of him
her eyes were kind.

IV

Too lately wed to have forgot the wooing.
Too unaccustomed as a bride to feel
Other than strange delight at her wife's
doing.

Even at the thought a gentle blush
would steal
Over her face, and then her lips would
frame

Some little word of loving, and her
eyes

Would brim and spill their tears,
when all they saw

Was the bright sun, slantwise
Through burgeoning trees, and all the
morning's flame

Burning and quivering round her. With
quick shame

She shut her heart and bent be-
fore the law.

V

He was a soldier, she was proud of that.
This was his house and she would keep
it well.

His honour was in fighting, hers in what
He'd left her here in charge of. Then
a spell

Of conscience sent her through the or-
chard spying

Upon the gardeners. Were their tools
about?

Were any branches broken? Had
the weeds

Been duly taken out

Under the *'spaliered* pears, and were
these lying

Nailed snug against the sunny bricks and
drying

Their leaves and satisfying all their
needs?

VI

She picked a stone up with a little pout,
Stones looked so ill in well-kept flower-
borders.

Where should she put it? All the paths
about

Were strewn with fair, red gravel by
her orders.

No stone could mar their sifted smooth-
ness. So

She hurried to the river. At the
edge

She stood a moment charmed by the
swift blue

Beyond the river sedge.

She watched it curdling, crinkling, and
the snow

Purled upon its wave-tops. Then, "Hullo,
My beauty, gently, or you'll wrig-
gle through."

VII

The Lady Eunice caught a willow spray
To save herself from tumbling in the
shallows

Which rippled to her feet. Then straight
away

She peered down stream among the
budding shallows.

A youth in leather breeches and a shirt
Of finest brodered lawn lay out upon

An overhanging bole and deftly
swayed

A well-hooked fish which shone

In the pale lemon sunshine like a spurt
Of silver, bowed and damascened, and
girt

With crimson spots and moons
which waned and played.

VIII

The fish hung circled for a moment,
ringed

And bright; then flung itself out, a
thin blade

Of spotted lightning, and its tail was
winged

With chipped and sparkled sunshine.

And the shade

Broke up and splintered into shafts of
light

Wheeling about the fish, who churned
the air

And made the fish-line hum, and
bent the rod

Almost to snapping. Care

The young man took against the twigs,
with slight,

Deft movements he kept fish and line
in tight

Obedience to his will with every
prod.

IX

He lay there, and the fish hung just beyond.

He seemed uncertain what more he should do.

He drew back, pulled the rod to correspond,

Tossed it and caught it; every time he threw,

He caught it nearer to the point. At last
The fish was near enough to touch. He paused.

Eunice knew well the craft —
"What's got the thing!"

She cried. "What can have caused —
Where is his net? The moment will be past.

The fish will wriggle free." She stopped aghast.

He turned and bowed. One arm
was in a sling.

X

The broad, black ribbon she had thought
his basket

Must hang from, held instead a useless arm.

"I do not wonder, Madam, that you ask it."

He smiled, for she had spoke aloud.
"The charm

Of trout fishing is in my eyes enhanced
When you must play your fish on land
as well."

"How will you take him?" Eunice asked. "In truth

I really cannot tell.

'Twas stupid of me, but it simply chanced
I never thought of that until he glanced
Into the branches. 'Tis a bit uncouth."

XI

He watched the fish against the blowing sky,

Writhing and glittering, pulling at the line.

"The hook is fast, I might just let him die,"

He mused. "But that would jar against your fine

Sense of true sportsmanship, I know it would,"

Cried Eunice. "Let me do it." Swift and light

She ran towards him. "It is so long now

Since I have felt a bite,

I lost all heart for everything." She stood,

Supple and strong, beside him, and her blood

Tingled her lissom body to a glow.

XII

She quickly seized the fish and with a stone

Ended its flurry, then removed the hook,

Untied the fly with well-poised fingers. Done,

She asked him where he kept his fishing-book.

He pointed to a coat flung on the ground.

She searched the pockets, found a shagreen case,

Replaced the fly, noticed a golden stamp

Filling the middle space.

Two letters half rubbed out were there, and round

About them gay rococo flowers wound
And tossed a spray of roses to the clasp.

XIII

The Lady Eunice puzzled over these.

"G.D." the young man gravely said.

"My name

Is Gervase Deane. Your servant, if you please."

"Oh, Sir, indeed I know you, for your fame

For exploits in the field has reached my ears.

I did not know you wounded and returned."

"But just come back, Madam. A silly prick

To gain me such unearned

Holiday making. And you, it appears,
Must be Sir Everard's lady. And my fears

At being caught a-trespassing were quick."

XIV

He looked so rueful that she laughed out
loud.

"You are forgiven, Mr. Deane. Even
more,

I offer you the fishing, and am proud
That you should find it pleasant from
this shore.

Nobody fishes now, my husband used
To angle daily, and I too with him.

He loved the spotted trout, and pike,
and dace,

He even had a whim
That flies my fingers tied swiftly confused
'The greater fish. And he must be ex-
cused,

Love weaves odd fancies in a
lonely place."

XV

She sighed because it seemed so long ago,
Those days with Everard; unthinking
took

The path back to the orchard. Strolling
so

She walked, and he beside her. In a
nook

Where a stone seat withdrew beneath low
boughs,

Full-blossomed, hummed with bees,
they sat them down.

She questioned him about the war,
the share

Her husband had, and grown
Eager by his clear answers, straight allows
Her hidden hopes and fears to speak,
and rouse

Her numbed love, which had
slumbered unaware.

XVI

Under the orchard trees daffodils danced
And jostled, turning sideways to the
wind.

A dropping cherry petal softly glanced
Over her hair, and slid away behind.
At the far end through twisted cherry-
trees

The old house glowed, geranium-hued,
with bricks

Bloomed in the sun like roses, low
and long,

Gabled, and with quaint tricks

Of chimneys carved and fretted. Out of
these

Grey smoke was shaken, which the faint
Spring breeze

Tossed into nothing. Then a
thrush's song

XVII

Needled its way through sound of bees
and river.

The notes fell, round and starred,
between young leaves,

Trilled to a spiral lilt, stopped on a
quiver.

The Lady Eunice listens and believes.
Gervase has many tales of her dear Lord,
His bravery, his knowledge, his charmed
life.

She quite forgets who's speaking in
the gladness

Of being this man's wife.

Gervase is wounded, grave indeed, the
word

Is kindly said, but to a softer chord

She strings her voice to ask with
wistful sadness,

XVIII

"And is Sir Everard still unscathed? I
fain

Would know the truth." "Quite well,
dear Lady, quite."

She smiled in her content. "So many
slain,

You must forgive me for a little
fright."

And he forgave her, not alone for that,
But because she was fingering his heart,

Pressing and squeezing it, and think-
ing so

Only to ease her smart

Of painful, apprehensive longing. At
Their feet the river swirled and chucked.

They sat

An hour there. The thrush flew
to and fro.

XIX

The Lady Eunice supped alone that day,
As always since Sir Everard had gone,
In the oak-panelled parlour, whose array
Of faded portraits in carved mouldings
shone.

Warriors and ladies, armoured, ruffed,
peruked.

Van Dykes with long, slim fingers; Hol-
beins, stout

And heavy-featured; and one Rubens
dame,

A peony just burst out,
With flaunting, crimson flesh. Eunice
rebuked

Her thoughts of gentler blood, when
these had duked

It with the best, and scorned to
change their name.

XX

A sturdy family, and old besides,
Much older than her own, the Earls
of Crowe.

Since Saxon days, these men had sought
their brides

Among the highest born, but always so,
Taking them to themselves, their wealth,
their lands,

But never their titles. Stern perhaps,
but strong,

The Framptons fed their blood from
richest streams,

Scorning the common throng.
Gazing upon these men, she understands
The toughness of the web wrought from
such strands,

And pride of Everard colours all
her dreams.

XXI

Eunice forgets to eat, watching their
faces

Flickering in the wind-blown candle's
shine.

Blue-coated lackeys tiptoe to their places,
And set out plates of fruit and jugs of
wine.

The table glitters black like Winter ice.
The Dartle's rushing, and the gentle
clash

Of blossomed branches, drifts into
her ears.

And through the casement sash
She sees each cherry stem a pointed slice
Of splintered moonlight, topped with all
the spice

And shimmer of the blossoms it
uprears.

XXII

"In such a night —" she laid the book
aside,

She could outnight the poet by think-
ing back.

In such a night she came here as a bride.
The date was graven in the almanack
Of her clasped memory. In this very
room

Had Everard uncloaked her. On this
seat

Had drawn her to him, bade her
note the trees,

How white they were and sweet
And later, coming to her, her dear groom,
Her Lord, had lain beside her in the
gloom

Of moon and shade, and whis-
pered her to ease.

XXIII

Her little taper made the room seem vast,
Caverned and empty. And her beating
heart

Rapped through the silence all about her
cast

Like some loud, dreadful death-watch
taking part

In this sad vigil. Slowly she undrest,
Put out the light and crept into her
bed.

The linen sheets were fragrant, but
so cold.

And brimming tears she shed,
Sobbing and quivering in her barren nest,
Her weeping lips into the pillow prest,
Her eyes sealed fast within its
smothering fold.

XXIV

The morning brought her a more stoic
mind,

And sunshine struck across the polished
floor.

She wondered whether this day she should
find

Gervase a-fishing, and so listen more,
Much more again, to all he had to tell.

And he was there, but waiting to begin
Until she came. They fished awhile,
then went

To the old seat within

The cherry's shade. He pleased her very
well
By his discourse. But ever he must dwell
Upon Sir Everard. Each incident

XXV

Must be related and each term explained.
How troops were set in battle, how a
siege
Was ordered and conducted. She com-
plained
Because he bungled at the fall of Liège.
'The curious names of parts of forts she
knew,
And aired with conscious pride her
ravelins,
And counterscarps, and lunets. The
day drew on,
And his dead fish's fins
In the hot sunshine turned a mauve-green
hue.
At last Gervase, guessing the hour, with-
drew.
But she sat long in still oblivion.

XXVI

Then he would bring her books, and read
to her
The poems of Dr. Donne, and the
blue river
Would murmur through the reading, and
a stir
Of birds and bees make the white
petals shiver,
And one or two would flutter prone and
lie
Spotting the smooth-clipped grass. The
days went by
Threaded with talk and verses. Green
leaves pushed
Through blossoms stubbornly.
Gervase, unconscious of dishonesty,
Fell into strong and watchful loving, free
He thought, since always would
his lips be hushed.

XXVII

But lips do not stay silent at command,
And Gervase strove in vain to order his.
Luckily Eunice did not understand
That he but read himself aloud, for
this

Their friendship would have snapped.
She treated him
And spoilt him like a brother. It was
now
"Gervase" and "Eunice" with them,
and he dined
Whenever she'd allow,
In the oak parlour, underneath the dim
Old pictured Framptons, opposite her
slim
Figure, so bright against the chair
behind.

XXVIII

Eunice was happier than she had been
For many days, and yet the hours were
long.
All Gervase told to her but made her
lean
More heavily upon the past. Among
Her hopes she lived, even when she was
giving
Her morning orders, even when she
twined
Nosegays to deck her parlours. With
the thought
Of Everard, her mind
Solaced its solitude, and in her striving
To do as he would wish was all her living.
She welcomed Gervase for the
news he brought.

XXIX

Black-hearts and white-hearts, bubbled
with the sun,
Hid in their leaves and knocked against
each other.
Eunice was standing, panting with her
run
Up to the tool-house just to get another
Basket. All those which she had brought
were filled,
And still Gervase pelted her from
above.
The buckles of his shoes flashed
higher and higher
Until his shoulders strove
Quite through the top. "Eunice, your
spirit's filled
This tree. White-hearts!" He shook, and
cherries spilled
And spat out from the leaves like
falling fire.

XXX

The wide, sun-winged June morning
 spread itself
 Over the quiet garden. And they
 packed
 Full twenty baskets with the fruit. "My
 shelf
 Of cordials will be stored with what it
 lacked.
 In future, none of us will drink strong ale,
 But cherry-brandy." "Vastly good, I
 vow,"
 And Gervase gave the tree another
 shake.
 The cherries seemed to flow
 Out of the sky in cloudfuls, like blown
 hail.
 Swift Lady Eunice ran, her farthingale,
 Unnoticed, tangling in a fallen
 rake.

XXXI

She gave a little cry and fell quite prone
 In the long grass, and lay there very
 still.
 Gervase leapt from the tree at her soft
 moan,
 And kneeling over her, with clumsy
 skill
 Unloosed her bodice, fanned her with his
 hat,
 And his unguarded lips pronounced his
 heart.
 "Eunice, my Dearest Girl, where are
 you hurt?"
 His trembling fingers dart
 Over her limbs seeking some wound. She
 strove
 To answer, opened wide her eyes, above
 Her knelt Sir Everard, with face
 alert.

XXXII

Her eyelids fell again at that sweet sight,
 "My Love!" she murmured, "Dearest!
 Oh, my Dear!"
 He took her in his arms and bore her
 right
 And tenderly to the old seat, and
 "Here
 I have you mine at last," she said, and
 swooned

Under his kisses. When she came once
 more
 To sight of him, she smiled in com-
 fort knowing
 Herself laid as before
 Close covered on his breast. And all her
 glowing
 Youth answered him, and ever nearer
 growing
 She twined him in her arms and
 soft festooned

XXXIII

Herself about him like a flowering vine,
 Drawing his lips to cling upon her own.
 A ray of sunlight pierced the leaves to
 shine
 Where her half-opened bodice let be
 shown
 Her white throat fluttering to his soft
 caress,
 Half-gasping with her gladness. And
 her pledge
 She whispers, melting with delight.
 A twig
 Snaps in the hornbeam hedge.
 A cackling laugh tears through the quiet-
 ness.
 Eunice starts up in terrible distress.
 "My God! What's that?" Her
 staring eyes are big.

XXXIV

Revulsed emotion set her body shaking
 As though she had an ague. Gervase
 swore,
 Jumped to his feet in such a dreadful
 taking
 His face was ghastly with the look it
 wore.
 Crouching and slipping through the trees,
 a man
 In worn, blue livery, a humpbacked
 thing,
 Made off. But turned every few
 steps to gaze
 At Eunice, and to fling
 Vile looks and gestures back. "The ruf-
 fian!
 By Christ's Death! I will split him to
 a span
 Of hog's thongs." She grasped at
 his sleeve, "Gervase!

XXXV

What are you doing here? Put down
that sword,
That's only poor old Tony, crazed and
lame.
We never notice him. With my dear
Lord
I ought not to have minded that he
came.

But, Gervase, it surprises me that you
Should so lack grace to stay here."
With one hand
She held her gaping bodice to conceal
Her breast. "I must demand
Your instant absence. Everard, but now
Returned, will hardly care for guests.
Adieu."
"Eunice, you're mad." His brain
began to reel.

XXXVI

He tried again to take her, tried to twist
Her arms about him. Truly, she had
said
Nothing should ever part them. In a mist
She pushed him from her, clasping her
aching head
In both her hands, and rocked and
sobbed aloud.
"Oh! Where is Everard? What does
this mean?
So lately come to leave me thus
alone!"
But Gervase had not seen
Sir Everard. Then, gently, to her bowed
And sickening spirit, he told of her proud
Surrender to him. He could hear
her moan.

XXXVII

Then shame swept over her and held her
numb,
Hiding her anguished face against the
seat.
At last she rose, a woman stricken —
dumb —
And trailed away with slowly-dragging
feet.
Gervase looked after her, but feared to
pass
The barrier set between them. All his
rare

Joy broke to fragments — worse than
that, unreal.
And standing lonely there,
His swollen heart burst out, and on the
grass
He flung himself and wept. He knew,
alas!
The loss so great his life could
never heal.

XXXVIII

For days thereafter Eunice lived retired,
Waited upon by one old serving-maid.
She would not leave her chamber, and
desired
Only to hide herself. She was afraid
Of what her eyes might trick her into
seeing,
Of what her longing urge her then to do.
What was this dreadful illness soli-
tude
Had tortured her into?
Her hours went by in a long constant
fleeing
The thought of that one morning. And
her being
Bruised itself on a happening so
rude.

XXXIX

It grew ripe Summer, when one morning
came
Her tirewoman with a letter, printed
Upon the seal were the Deane crest and
name.
With utmost gentleness, the letter
hinted
His understanding and his deep regret.
But would she not permit him once
again
To pay her his profound respects?
No word
Of what had passed should pain
Her resolution. Only let them get
Back the old comradeship. Her eyes
were wet
With starting tears, now truly she
deplored

XL

His misery. Yes, she was wrong to keep
Away from him. He hardly was to
blame.

'Twas she — she shuddered and began to weep.

'Twas her fault! Hers! Her everlasting shame

Was that she suffered him, whom not at all

She loved. Poor Boy! Yes, they must still be friends.

She owed him that to keep the balance straight.

It was such poor amends
Which she could make for rousing hopes
to gall

Him with their unfulfilment. Tragical
It was, and she must leave him
desolate.

XLII

Hard silence he had forced upon his lips
For long and long, and would have
done so still

Had not she — here she pressed her finger
tips

Against her heavy eyes. Then with
forced will

She wrote that he might come, sealed
with the arms

Of Crowe and Frampton twined. Her
heart felt lighter

When this was done. It seemed her
constant care

Might some day cease to fright her.
Illness could be no crime, and dreadful
harms

Did come from too much sunshine. Her
alarms

Would lessen when she saw him
standing there,

XLIII

Simple and kind, a brother just returned
From journeying, and he would treat
her so.

She knew his honest heart, and if there
burned

A spark in it he would not let it show.
But when he really came, and stood be-
side

Her underneath the fruitless cherry
boughs,

He seemed a tired man, gaunt, lead-
en-eyed.

He made her no more vows,

Nor did he mention one thing he had
tried

To put into his letter. War supplied
Him topics. And his mind seemed
occupied.

XLIII

Daily they met. And gravely walked and
talked.

He read her no more verses, and he
stayed

Only until their conversation, balked
Of every natural channel, fled dis-
mayed.

Again the next day she would meet him,
trying

To give her tone some healthy spright-
liness,

But his uncager dignity soon chilled
Her well-prepared address.

Thus Summer waned, and in the morn-
ings, crying

Of wild geese startled Eunice, and their
flying

Whirred overhead for days and
never stilled.

XLIV

One afternoon of grey clouds and white
wind,

Eunice awaited Gervase by the river.
The Dartle splashed among the reeds and
whined

Over the willow-roots, and a long sliver
Of caked and slobbered foam crept up
the bank.

All through the garden, drifts of skirl-
ing leaves

Blew up, and settled down, and
blew again.

The cherry-trees were weaves
Of empty, knotted branches, and a dank
Mist hid the house, mouldy it smelt and
rank

With sodden wood, and still un-
falling rain.

XLV

Eunice paced up and down. No joy she
took

At meeting Gervase, but the custom
grown

Still held her. He was late. She sudden
 shook,
 And caught at her stopped heart. Her
 eyes had shown
 Sir Everard emerging from the mist.
 His uniform was travel-stained and torn,
 His jackboots muddy, and his eager
 stride
 Jangled his spurs. A thorn
 Entangled, trailed behind him. To the
 tryst
 He hastened. Eunice shuddered, ran — a
 twist
 Round a sharp turning and she
 fled to hide.

XLVI

But he had seen her as she swiftly ran,
 A flash of white against the river's grey.
 "Eunice," he called. "My darling. Eunice. Can
 You hear me? It is Everard. All day
 I have been riding like the very devil
 'To reach you sooner. Are you startled,
 Dear?"
 He broke into a run and followed
 her,
 And caught her, faint with fear,
 Cowering and trembling as though she
 some evil
 Spirit were seeing. "What means this
 uncivil
 Greeting, Dear Heart?" He saw
 her senses blur.

XLVII

Swaying and catching at the seat, she
 tried
 To speak, but only gurgled in her
 throat.
 At last, straining to hold herself, she
 cried
 To him for pity, and her strange words
 smote
 A coldness through him, for she begged
 Gervase
 To leave her, 'twas too much a second
 time.
 Gervase must go, always Gervase, her
 mind
 Repeated like a rhyme
 This name he did not know. In sad
 amaze

He watched her, and that hunted, fearful
 gaze,
 So unremembering and so unkind.

XLVIII

Softly he spoke to her, patiently dealt
 With what he feared her madness. By
 and by
 He pierced her understanding. Then he
 knelt
 Upon the seat, and took her hands:
 "Now try
 To think a minute I am come, my Dear,
 Unharm'd and back on furlough. Are
 you glad
 To have your lover home again? To
 me,
 Pickthorn has never had
 A greater pleasantness. Could you not
 bear
 To come and sit awhile beside me here?
 A stone between us surely should
 not be."

XLIX

She smiled a little wan and ravelled smile,
 Then came to him and on his shoulder
 laid
 Her head, and they two rested there
 awhile,
 Each taking comfort. Not a word was
 said.
 But when he put his hand upon her
 breast
 And felt her beating heart, and with
 his lips
 Sought solace for her and himself,
 She started
 As one sharp lashed with whips,
 And pushed him from her, moaning, his
 dumb quest
 Denied and shuddered from. And he,
 distrest,
 Loosened his wife, and long they
 sat there, parted.

L

Eunice was very quiet all that day,
 A little dazed, and yet she seemed content.
 At candle-time, he asked if she would play
 Upon her harpsichord, at once she went

And tinkled airs from Lully's *Carnival*
And *Bacchus*, newly brought away
from France.

Then jaunted through a lively riga-
doon
To please him with a dance
By Purcell, for he said that surely all
Good Englishmen had pride in national
Accomplishment. But tiring of it
soon

LI

He whispered her that if she had for-
given
His startling her that afternoon, the
clock
Marked early bed-time. Surely it was
Heaven
He entered when she opened to his
knock.

The hours rustled in the trailing wind
Over the chimney. Close they lay and
knew

Only that they were wedded. At
his touch
Anxiety she threw
Away like a shed garment, and inclined
Herself to cherish him, her happy mind
Quivering, unthinking, loving over-
much.

LII

Eunice lay long awake in the cool
night

After her husband slept. She gazed with
joy
Into the shadows, painting them with
bright

Pictures of all her future life's em-
ploy.

Twin gems they were, set to a single
jewel,

Each shining with the other. Soft she
turned

And felt his breath upon her hair,
and prayed

Her happiness was earned.
Past Earls of Crowe should give their
blood for fuel

To light this Frampton's hearth-fire. By
no cruel

Affrightings would she ever be
dismayed.

LIII

When Everard, next day, asked her in
joke

What name it was that she had called
him by,

She told him of Gervase, and as she
spoke

She hardly realized it was a lie.
Her vision she related, but she hid

The fondness into which she had been
led.

Sir Everard just laughed and pinched
her ear,

And quite out of her head
The matter drifted. Then Sir Everard

chid
Himself for laziness, and off he rid

To see his men and count his
farming-gear.

LIV

At supper he seemed overspread with
gloom,

But gave no reason why, he only asked
More questions of Gervase, and round the
room

He walked with restless strides. At last
he tasked

Her with a greater feeling for this man
Than she had given. Eunice quick

denied
The slightest interest other than a

friend
Might claim. But he replied

He thought she underrated. Then a ban
He put on talk and music. He'd a plan

To work at, draining swamps at
Pickthorn End.

LV

Next morning Eunice found her Lord
still changed,

Hard and unkind, with bursts of anger.
Pride

Kept him from speaking out. His prob-
ings ranged

All round his torment. Lady Eunice
tried

To sooth him. So a week went by, and
then

His anguish flooded over; with clenched
hands

Striving to stem his words, he told
 her plain
 Tony had seen them, "brands
 Burning in Hell," the man had said.
 Again
 Eunice described her vision, and how
 when
 Awoke at last she had known
 dreadful pain.

LVI

He could not credit it, and misery fed
 Upon his spirit, day by day it grew.
 To Gervase he forbade the house, and led
 The Lady Eunice such a life she flew
 At his approaching footsteps. Winter
 came
 Snowing and blustering through the
 Manor trees.
 All the roof-edges spiked with icicles
 In fluted companies.
The Lady Eunice with her tambour-frame
 Kept herself sighing company. The flame
 Of the birch fire glittered on the
 walls.

LVII

A letter was brought to her as she sat,
 Unsealed, unsigned. It told her that
 his wound,
 The writer's, had so well recovered that
 To join his regiment he felt him bound.
 But would she not wish him one short
 "Godspeed,"
 He asked no more. Her greeting would
 suffice.

He had resolved he never should re-
 turn.

Would she this sacrifice
 Make for a dying man? How could she
 read the rest! But forcing her
 eyes to the deed,
 She read. Then dropped it in the
 fire to burn.

LVIII

Gervase had set the river for their meet-
 ing
 As farthest from the farms where
 Everard
 Spent all his days. How should he
 know such cheating
 Was quite expected, at least no dullard

Was Everard Frampton. Hours by hours
 he hid
 Among the willows watching. Dusk
 had come,
 And from the Manor he had long
 been gone.
 Eunice her burdensome
 Task set about. Hooded and cloaked, she
 slid
 Over the slippery paths, and soon amid
 The tallows saw a boat tied to a
 stone.

LIX

Gervase arose, and kissed her hand, then
 pointed
 Into the boat. She shook her head,
 but he
 Begged her to realize why, and with dis-
 jointed
 Words told her of what peril there
 might be
 From listeners along the river bank.
 A push would take them out of ear-
 shot. Ten
 Minutes was all he asked, then she
 should land,
 He go away again,
 Forever this time. Yet how could he
 thank
 Her for so much compassion. Here she
 sank
 Upon a thwart, and bid him quick
 unstrand

LX

His boat. He cast the rope, and shoved
 the keel
 Free of the gravel; jumped, and dropped
 beside
 Her; took the oars, and they began to
 steal
 Under the overhanging trees. A wide
 Gash of red lantern-light cleft like a
 blade
 Into the gloom, and struck on Eunice
 sitting
 Rigid and stark upon the after
 thwart.
 It blazed upon their fitting
 In merciless light. A moment so it
 stayed,

Then was extinguished, and Sir Everard
made
One leap, and landed just a frac-
tion short.

LXI

His weight upon the gunwale tipped the
boat
To straining balance. Everard lurched
and seized
His wife and held her smothered to his
coat.
"Everard, loose me, we shall drown —"
and squeezed
Against him, she beat with her hands. He
gasped
"Never, by God!" The slidden boat
gave way
And the black foamy water split —
and met.
Bubbled up through the spray.
A wailing rose and in the branches rasped,
And creaked, and stilled. Over the tree-
tops, clasped
In the blue evening, a clear moon
was set.

LXII

They lie entangled in the twisting roots,
Embraced forever. Their cold marriage
bed
Close-canopied and curtained by the
shoots
Of willows and pale birches. At the
head,
White lilies, like still swans, placidly float
And sway above the pebbles. Here are
waves
Sun-smitten for a threaded counter-
pane
Gold-woven on their graves.
In perfect quietness they sleep, remote
In the green, rippled twilight. Death has
smote
Them to perpetual oneness who
were twain.

THE CREMONA VIOLIN

PART FIRST

Frau Concert-Meister Altgelt shut the
door.
A storm was rising, heavy gusts of wind

Swirled through the trees, and scattered
leaves before
Her on the clean, flagged path. The sky
behind
The distant town was black, and sharp
defined
Against it shone the lines of roofs and
towers,
Superimposed and flat like cardboard
flowers.

A pasted city on a purple ground,
Picked out with luminous paint, it
seemed. The cloud
Split on an edge of lightning, and a sound
Of rivers full and rushing boomed through
bowed,
Tossed, hissing branches. Thunder
rumbled loud
Beyond the town fast swallowing into
gloom.
Frau Altgelt closed the windows of each
room.

She bustled round to shake by constant
moving
The strange, weird atmosphere. She
stirred the fire,
She twitched the supper-cloth as though
improving
Its careful setting, then her own attire
Came in for notice, tiptoeing higher and
higher
She peered into the wall-glass, now ad-
justing
A straying lock, or else a ribbon thrusting

This way or that to suit her. At last
sitting,
Or rather plumping down upon a chair,
She took her work, the stocking she was
knitting,
And watched the rain upon the window
glare
In white, bright drops. Through the black
glass a flare
Of lightning squirmed about her needles.
"Oh!"
She cried. "What can be keeping Theo-
dore so!"

A roll of thunder set the casements clap-
ping.
Frau Altgelt flung her work aside and
ran,

Pulled open the house door, with kerchief
flapping
She stood and gazed along the street. A
man
Flung back the garden-gate and nearly
ran
Her down as she stood in the door. "Why,
Dear,
What in the name of patience brings you
here?

Quick, Lotta, shut the door, my violin
I fear is wetted. Now, Dear, bring a light.
This clasp is very much too worn and
thin.

I'll take the other fiddle out to-night
If it still rains. Tut! Tut! my child, you're
quite

Clumsy. Here, help me, hold the case
while I —

Give me the candle. No, the inside's dry.

Thank God for that! Well, Lotta, how
are you?

A bad storm, but the house still stands,
I see.

Is my pipe filled, my Dear? I'll have a
few

Puffs and a snooze before I eat my tea.
What do you say? That you were feared
for me?

Nonsense, my child. Yes, kiss me, now
don't talk.

I need a rest, the theatre's a long walk."

Her needles still, her hands upon her lap
Patiently laid, Charlotta Altgelt sat
And watched the rain-run window. In
his nap

Her husband stirred and muttered. Seeing
that,

Charlotta rose and softly, pit-a-pat,
Climbed up the stairs, and in her little
room

Found sighing comfort with a moon in
bloom.

But even rainy windows, silver-lit
By a new-burst, storm-whetted moon,
may give

But poor content to loneliness, and it
Was hard for young Charlotta so to strive
And down her eagerness and learn to live
In placid quiet. While her husband slept,
Charlotta in her upper chamber wept.

Herr Concert-Meister Altgelt was a man
Gentle and unambitious, that alone
Had kept him back. He played as few
men can,

Drawing out of his instrument a tone
So shimmering-sweet and palpitant, it
shone

Like a bright thread of sound hung in
the air,

Afloat and swinging upward, slim and fair.

Above all things, above Charlotta his wife,
Herr Altgelt loved his violin, a fine
Cremona pattern, Stradivari's life
Was flowering out of early discipline
When this was fashioned. Of soft-cutting
pine

The belly was. The back of broadly
curled

Maple, the head made thick and sharply
whirled.

The slanting, youthful sound-holes
through

The belly of fine, vigorous pine
Mellowed each note and blew
It out again with a woody flavour
Tanged and fragrant as fir-trees are
When breezes in their needles jar.

The varnish was an orange-brown
Lustered like glass that's long laid
down

Under a crumbling villa stone.
Puffed stoutly, with mitres which
point

Straight up the corners. Each curve
and joint

Clear, and bold, and thin.
Such was Herr Theodore's violin.

Seven o'clock, the Concert-Meister gone
With his best violin, the rain being
stopped,

Frau Lotta in the kitchen sat alone
Watching the embers which the fire
dropped.

The china shone upon the dresser, topped
By polished copper vessels which her skill
Kept brightly burnished. It was very still.

An air from *Orfeo* hummed in her head.
Herr Altgelt had been practising before
The night's performance. Charlotta had
plead

With him to stay with her. Even at the door
 She'd begged him not to go. "I do implore
 You for this evening, Theodore," she had said.
 "Leave them to-night, and stay with me, instead."

"A silly poppet!" Theodore pinched her ear.
 "You'd like to have our good Elector turn
 Me out I think." "But, Theodore, something queer
 Ails me. Oh, do but notice how they burn,
 My cheeks! The thunder worried me. You're stern,
 And cold, and only love your work, I know.
 But Theodore, for this evening, do not go."

But he had gone, hurriedly at the end,
 For she had kept him talking. Now she sat
 Alone again, always alone, the trend
 Of all her thinking brought her back to that
 She wished to banish. What would life be? What?
 For she was young, and loved, while he was moved
 Only by music. Each day that was proved.

Each day he rose and practised. While he played,
 She stopped her work and listened, and her heart
 Swelled painfully beneath her bodice. Swayed
 And longing, she would hide from him her smart.
 "Well, Lottchen, will that do?" Then what a start
 She gave, and she would run to him and cry,
 And he would gently chide her, "Fie, Dear, fie."

I'm glad I played it well. But such a taking!
 You'll hear the thing enough before I've done."

And she would draw away from him, still shaking.

Had he but guessed she was another one,
 Another violin. Her strings were aching,
 Stretched to the touch of his bow hand, again
 He played and she almost broke at the strain.

Where was the use of thinking of it now,
 Sitting alone and listening to the clock!
 She'd best make haste and knit another row.

Three hours at least must pass before his knock
 Would startle her. It always was a shock,
 She listened — listened — for so long before,
 That when it came her hearing almost tore.

She caught herself just starting in to listen.
 What nerves she had: rattling like brittle sticks!
 She wandered to the window, for the glisten
 Of a bright moon was tempting. Snuffed the wicks
 Of her two candles. Still she could not fix
 To anything. The moon in a broad swath
 Beckoned her out and down the garden-path.

Against the house, her hollyhocks stood high
 And black, their shadows doubling them. The night
 Was white and still with moonlight, and a sigh
 Of blowing leaves was there, and the dim flight
 Of insects, and the smell of aconite,
 And stocks, and Marvel of Peru. She fitted
 Along the path, where blocks of shadow pitted

The even flags. She let herself go dreaming
 Of Theodore her husband, and the tune
 From *Orfeo* swam through her mind, but seeming

Changed — shriller. Of a sudden, a clear moon
 Showed her a passer-by, inopportune
 Indeed, but here he was, whistling and
 striding.
 Lotta squeezed in between the currants,
 hiding.

"The best laid plans of mice and men,"
 alas!
 The stranger came indeed, but did not
 pass.
 Instead, he leant upon the garden-gate,
 folding his arms and whistling. Lotta's
 state,
 Crouched in the prickly currants, on wet
 grass,
 Was far from pleasant. Still the stranger
 stayed,
 And Lotta in her currants watched, dis-
 mayed.

He seemed a proper fellow standing there
 In the bright moonshine. His cocked hat
 was laced
 With silver, and he wore his own brown
 hair
 Tied, but unpowdered. His whole bear-
 ing graced
 A fine cloth coat, and ruffled shirt, and
 chased
 Sword-belt. Charlotta looked, but her
 position
 Was hardly easy. When would his voli-
 tion

Suggest his walking on? And then that
 tune!
 A half-a-dozen bars from *Orféo*
 Gone over and over, and murdered. What
 Fortune
 Had brought him there to stare about
 him so?
 "Ach, Gott im Himmel! Why will he
 not go!"
 Thought Lotta, but the young man
 whistled on,
 And seemed in no great hurry to be gone.

Charlotta, crouched among the currant
 bushes,
 Watched the moon slowly dip from twig
 to twig.
 If Theodore should chance to come, and
 blushes

Streamed over her. He would not care a
 fig,
 He'd only laugh. She pushed aside a
 sprig
 Of sharp-edged leaves and peered, then
 she uprose
 Amid her bushes. "Sir," said she, "pray
 whose

Garden do you suppose you're watching?
 Why
 Do you stand there? I really must insist
 Upon your leaving. 'Tis unmannerly
 To stay so long." The young man gave
 a twist
 And turned about, and in the amethyst
 Moonlight he saw her like a nymph half-
 risen
 From the green bushes which had been
 her prison.

He swept his hat off in a hurried bow.
 "Your pardon, Madam, I had no idea
 I was not quite alone, and that is how
 I came to stay. My trespass was not
 sheer
 Impertinence. I thought no one was
 here,
 And really gardens cry to be admired.
 To-night especially it seemed required.

And may I beg to introduce myself?
 Heinrich Marohl of Munich. And your
 name?"
 Charlotta told him. And the artful elf
 Promptly exclaimed about her husband's
 fame.
 So Lotta, half-unwilling, slowly came
 To conversation with him. When she
 went
 Into the house, she found the evening
 spent.

Theodore arrived quite wearied out and
 teased,
 With all excitement in him burned away.
 It had gone well, he said, the audience
 pleased,
 And he had played his very best to-day,
 But afterwards he had been forced to
 stay
 And practise with the stupid ones. His
 head
 Ached furiously, and he must get to
 bed.

PART SECOND

Herr Concert-Meister Altgelt played,
And the four strings of his violin
Were spinning like bees on a day in
Spring.

The notes rose into the wide sun-mote
Which slanted through the window,
They lay like coloured beads a-row,
They knocked together and parted,
And started to dance,
Skipping, tripping, each one slipping
Under and over the others so
That the polychrome fire streamed
like a lance

Or a comet's tail,
Behind them.

Then a wail arose — crescendo —
And dropped from off the end of
the bow,

And the dancing stopped.
A scent of lilies filled the room,
Long and slow. Each large white
bloom

Breathed a sound which was holy
perfume from a blessed censer,
And the hum of an organ tone,
And they waved like fans in a hall
of stone

Over a bier standing there in the
center, alone.

Each lily bent slowly as it was blown.
Like smoke they rose from the
violin —

Then faded as a swifter bowing
Jumbled the notes like wavelets
flowing

In a splashing, pashing, rippling
motion

Between broad meadows to an ocean
Wide as a day and blue as a flower,
Where every hour
Gulls dipped, and scattered, and
squawked, and squealed.

And over the marshes the Angelus
pealed,

And the prows of the fishing-boats
were spattered

With spray.

And away a couple of frigates were
starting

To race to Java with all sails set,
Topgallants, and royals, and stunsails,
and jibs,

And wide moonsails; and the shining
rails

Were polished so bright they sparked
in the sun.

All the sails went up with a run:
"They call me Hanging Johnny,

Away-i-oh;

They call me Hanging Johnny,
So hang, boys, hang."

And the sun had set and the high
moon whitened,

And the ship heeled over to the
breeze.

He drew her into the shade of the
sails,

And whispered tales
Of voyages in the China seas,

And his arm around her

Held and bound her.

She almost swooned,

With the breeze and the moon

And the slipping sea,

And he beside her,

Touching her, leaning —

The ship careening,

With the white moon steadily shining
over

Her and her lover,

Theodore, still her lover!

Then a quiver fell on the crowded
notes,

And slowly floated

A single note which spread and
spread

Till it filled the room with a shimmer
like gold,

And noises shivered throughout its
length,

And tried its strength.

They pulled it, and tore it,

And the stuff waned thinner, but
still it bore it.

Then a wide rent

Split the arching tent,

And balls of fire spurted through,

Spitting yellow, and mauve, and
blue.

One by one they were quenched as
they fell,

Only the blue burned steadily.

Paler and paler it grew, and — faded
— away.

Herr Altgelt stopped.

"Well, Lottachen, my Dear, what do you say?

I think I'm in good trim. Now let's have dinner.

What's this, my Love, you're very sweet to-day.

I wonder how it happens I'm the winner Of so much sweetness. But I think you're thinner;

You're like a bag of feathers on my knee. Why, Lotta child, you're almost strangling me.

I'm glad you're going out this afternoon. The days are getting short, and I'm so tied

At the Court Theatre my poor little bride Has not much junketing I fear, but soon I'll ask our manager to grant a boon. To-night, perhaps, I'll get a pass for you, And when I go, why Lotta can come too.

Now dinner, Love. I want some onion soup

To whip me up till that rehearsal's over. You know it's odd how some women can stoop!

Fräulein Gebnitz has taken on a lover, A Jew named Goldstein. No one can discover

If it's his money. But she lives alone Practically. Gebnitz is a stone,

Pores over books all day, and has no ear For his wife's singing. Artists must have men;

They need appreciation. But it's queer What messes people make of their lives, when

They should know more. If Gebnitz finds out, then

His wife will pack. Yes, shut the door at once.

I did not feel it cold, I am a dunce."

Frau Altgelt tied her bonnet on and went Into the streets. A bright, crisp Autumn wind

Flirted her skirts and hair. A turbulent, Audacious wind it was, now close behind, Pushing her bonnet forward till it twined The strings across her face, then from in front

Slantingly swinging at her with a shunt,

Until she lay against it, struggling, pushing,

Dismayed to find her clothing tightly bound

Around her, every fold and wrinkle crushing

Itself upon her, so that she was wound In draperies as clinging as those found Sucking about a sea nymph on the frieze Of some old Grecian temple. In the breeze

The shops and houses had a quality Of hard and dazzling colour; something sharp

And buoyant, like white, puffing sails at sea.

The city streets were twanging like a harp.

Charlotta caught the movement, skippingly

She blew along the pavement, hardly knowing

Toward what destination she was going.

She fetched up opposite a jeweller's shop, Where filigreed tiaras shone like crowns, And necklaces of emeralds seemed to drop And then float up again with lightness.

Browns Of striped agates struck her like cold frowns

Amid the gaiety of topaz seals, Carved though they were with heads, and arms, and wheels.

A row of pencils knobbed with quartz or sard

Delighted her. And rings of every size Turned smartly round like hoops before her eyes,

Amethyst-flamed or ruby-girdled, jarred To spokes and flashing triangles, and starred

Like rockets bursting on a festal day. Charlotta could not tear herself away.

With eyes glued tightly on a golden box,

Whose rare enamel piqued her with its hue,

Changeable, iridescent, shuttlecocks Of shades and lustres always darting through

Its level, superimposing sheet of blue,

Charlotte did not hear footsteps up
proaching
She started at the words "Am I en-
croaching?"

'Oh, Heinrich, how you frightened me! I
thought
We were to meet at three, is it quite
that?"

'No, it is not," he answered, "but I've
caught
The trick of missing you One thing is
flat,
I cannot go on this way Life is what
Might best be conjured up by the word
Hail
Dearest, when will you come?" Lotta, to
quell

His effervescence, pointed to the gems
Within the window, asked him to admire
A bracelet or a buckle But one stems
Uneasily the burning of a fire
Heinrich was chafing, pricked by his
desire
Little by little she wooed him to her
mood
Until at last he promised to be good

But here he started on another tack,
To buy a jewel, which one would Lotta
choose
She vainly urged against him all her lack
Of other trinkets Should she dare to use
A ring or brooch her husband might ac-
cuse
Her of extravagance, and ask to see
A strict accounting, or still worse might
be

But Heinrich would not be persuaded
Why
Should he not give her what he liked?
And in
He went, determined certainly to buy
A thing so beautiful that it would win
Her wavering fancy Altgelt's violin
He would outscore by such a handsome
jewel
That Lotta could no longer be so cruel!

Pity Charlotta, torn in diverse ways
If she went in with him, the shopman
might
Recognize her, gave her her name, in days

To come he could denounce her In her
fright
She almost fled But Heinrich would be
quite
Capable of pursuing By and by
She pushed the door and entered hur-
riedly

It took some pains to keep him from
bestowing
A pair of ruby earrings, carved like roses,
The setting twined to represent the grow-
ing
Tendrils and leaves, upon her "Who
supposes
I could obtain such things! It simply
closes
All comfort for me" So he changed his
mind
And bought as slight a gift as he could
find

A locket, frosted over with seed pearls,
Oblong and slim, for wearing at the neck,
Or hidden in the bosom, their joined curls
Should lie in it And further to bedeck
His love, Heinrich had picked a whiff, a
fleck
The merest puff of a thin, linked chain
To hang it from Lotta could not refrain

From weeping as they sauntered down
the street
She did not want the locket, yet she did
To have him love her she found very
sweet,
But it is hard to keep love always hid
Then there was something in her heart
which chid
Her, told her she loved Theodore in him,
That all these meetings were a foolish
whim

She thought of Theodore and the life
they led,
So near together, but so little mingled
The great clouds bulged and belied over
head,
And the fresh wind about her body
tingled,
The crane of a large warehouse creaked
and jingled,
Charlotta held her breath for very fear,
About her in the street she seemed to
hear.

"They call me Hanging Johnny
 Away! oh,
 They call me Hanging Johnny
 So hang, boys, hang"

And it was Theodore, under the racing
 skies,
 Who held her and who whispered in her
 ear
 She knew her heart was telling her no
 lies,
 Beating and hammering He was so dear,
 The touch of him would send her in a
 queer
 Swoon that was half an ecstasy And
 yearning
 For Theodore, she wandered, slowly turn-
 ing

Street after street as Heinrich wished it so
 He had some aim, she had forgotten
 what
 Their progress was confused and very
 slow,
 But at the last they reached a lonely spot,
 A garden far above the highest shot
 Of soaring steeple At their feet, the
 town
 Spread open like a chequer board laid
 down

Lotta was dimly conscious of the rest,
 Vaguely remembered how he clasped the
 chain
 About her neck She treated it in jest,
 And saw his face cloud over with sharp
 pain
 Then suddenly she felt as though a strain
 Were put upon her, collared like a slave,
 Leashed in the meshes of this thing he
 gave

She seized the flimsy rings with both her
 hands
 To snap it, but they held with odd per-
 sistence
 Her eyes were blinded by two wind-blown
 strands
 Of hair which had been loosened Her
 resistance
 Melted within her, from remotest dis-
 tance,
 Misty, unreal, his face grew warm and
 near,
 And giving way she knew him very dear.

For long he held her, and they both
 gazed down
 At the wide city, and its blue, bridged
 river
 From wooing he jested with her, snipped
 the blown
 Strands of her hair, and tied them with
 a sliver
 Cut from his own head. But she gave a
 shiver
 When, opening the locket, they were
 placed
 Under the glass, commingled and en-
 laced

"When will you have it so with us?" He
 sighed
 She shook her head He pressed her
 further. "No,
 No, Heinrich, Theodore loves me," and
 she tried
 To free herself and rise He held her so,
 Clipped by his arms, she could not move
 nor go.
 "But you love me," he whispered, with
 his face
 Burning against her through her kerchief's
 lace

Frau Altgelt knew she toyed with fire,
 knew
 That what her husband lit this other man
 Fanned to hot flame She told herself
 that few
 Women were so discreet as she, who ran
 No danger since she knew what things
 to ban
 She opened her house door at five o'clock,
 A short half-hour before her husband's
 knock

PART THIRD

The *Residenz-Theater* sparked and
 hummed
 With lights and people Gebnitz was to
 sing,
 That rare soprano All the fiddles
 strummed
 With tuning up, the wood winds made
 a ring
 Of reedy bubbling noises, and the sting
 Of sharp, red brass pierced every ear
 drum, patting
 From muffled tympani made a dark slat-
 ting

Across the silver shimmering of flutes;
 A bassoon grunted, and an oboe wailed;
 The 'celli pizzicato-ed like great lutes,
 And mutterings of double basses trailed
 Away to silence, while loud harp-strings
 hailed
 Their thin, bright colours down in such
 a scatter
 They lost themselves amid the general
 clatter.

Frau Altgelt in the gallery, alone,
 Felt lifted up into another world.
 Before her eyes a thousand candles shone
 In the great chandeliers. A maze of
 curled
 And powdered periwigs past her eyes
 swirled.
 She smelt the smoke of candles guttering,
 And caught the glint of jewelled fans
 fluttering

All round her in the boxes. Red and gold,
 The house, like rubies set in filigree,
 Filliped the candlelight about, and bold
 Young sparks with eye-glasses, unblush-
 ingly
 Ogled fair beauties in the balcony.
 An officer went by, his steel spurs jang-
 ling.
 Behind Charlotta an old man was
 wrangling

About a play-bill he had bought and lost.
 Three drunken soldiers had to be ejected.
 Frau Altgelt's eyes stared at the vacant
 post
 Of Concert-Meister, she at once detected
 The stir which brought him. But she felt
 neglected
 When with no glance about him or her
 way,
 He lifted up his violin to play.

The curtain went up? Perhaps. If so,
 Charlotta never saw it go.
 The famous Fräulein Gebnitz' sing-
 ing
 Only came to her like the ringing
 Of bells at a festa
 Which swing in the air
 And nobody realizes they are there.
 They jingle and jangle,
 And clang, and bang,
 And never a soul could tell whether
 they rang,

For the plopping of guns and rockets
 And the chinking of silver to spend,
 in one's pockets,
 And the shuffling and clapping of
 feet,
 And the loud flapping
 Of flags, with the drums,
 As the military comes.
 It's a famous tune to walk to,
 And I wonder where they're off to.
 Step-step-stepping to the beating of
 the drums.
 But the rhythm changes as though
 a mist
 Were curling and twisting
 Over the landscape.
 For a moment a rhythmless, tuneless
 fog
 Encompasses her. Then her senses
 jog
 To the breath of a stately minuet.
 Herr Altgelt's violin is set
 In tune to the slow, sweeping bows,
 and retreats and advances,
 To curtsies brushing the waxen floor
 as the Court dances.
 Long and peaceful like warm Sum-
 mer nights
 When stars shine in the quiet river,
 And against the lights
 Blundering insects knock,
 And the Rathaus clock
 Booms twice, through the shrill
 sounds
 Of flutes and horns in the lamplit
 grounds.
 Pressed against him in the mazy
 wavering
 Of a country dance, with her short
 breath quavering
 She leans upon the beating, throb-
 bing
 Music. Laughing, sobbing,
 Feet gliding after sliding feet;
 His — hers —
 The ballroom blurs —
 She feels the air
 Lifting her hair,
 And the lapping of water on the
 stone stair.
 He is there! He is there!
 Twang harps, and squeal, you thin
 violins,
 That the dancers may dance, and
 never discover

The old stone stair leading down to
the river
With the chestnut tree branches
hanging over
Her and her lover
Theodore, still her lover!

The evening passed like this, in a half
faint,
Delirium with waking intervals
Which were the entr'acts Under the
restraint
Of a large company, the constant calls
For oranges or drops from the stalls
Outside, the talk, the pressing to and fro,
Lotti sat ill at ease, incognito

She heard the Gebnitz praised, the tenor
lauded,
The music vaunted as most excellent
The scenery and the costumes were ap-
plauded,
The better it was whispered had been sent
From Italy. The Herr Direktor spent
A fortune on them, so the gossips said
Charlotta felt a lightness in her head

When the next act began, her eyes were
swimming,
Her prodded ears were aching and con-
fused
The first notes from the orchestra sent
skimming
Her outward consciousness Her brain
was fused
Into the music, Theodore's music! Used
To hear him play, she caught his single
tone
For all she noticed they two were alone

PART FOURTH

Frau Altgelt waited in the chilly street,
Hustled by lackeys who ran up and down
Shouting their coachmen's names, forced
to retreat
A pace or two by lurching chairmen,
thrown
Rudely aside by lunkboys, boldly shown
The ogling rapture in two bleary eyes
Thrust close to hers in most unpleasant
wise

Escaping these, she hit a liveried aim,
Was sworn at by this glittering gentleman
And ordered off. However, no great harm

Came to her. But she looked a trifle wan
When Theodore, her belated guardian,
Emerged. She snuggled up against him,
trembling,
Half out of fear, half out of the assem-
bling

Of all the thoughts and needs his play-
ing had given
Had she enjoyed herself, he wished to
know
"Oh! Theodore, can't you feel that it
was Heaven!"
"Heaven! My Lottchen, and was it so?"
Gebnitz was in good voice, but all the
flow
Of her last aria was spoiled by Klops,
A wretched flutist, she was mad as hops."

It was so simple, so matter of fact,
Charlotta Altgelt knew not what to say
To bring him to her dream. His lack of
tact
Kept him explaining all the homeward way
How this thing had gone well, that badly
"Stav,
Theodore!" she cried at last "You know
to me
Nothing was real, it was an' ecstasy"

And he was heartily glad she had enjoyed
Herself so much, and said so "But it's
good
To be got home again." He was em-
ployed
In looking at his violin, the wood
Was old, and evening air did it no good
But when he drew up to the table for tea
Something about his wife's vivacity

Struck him as hectic, worried him in
short
He talked of this and that but watched
her close
Fear over, he endeavoured to extort
The cause of her excitement. She arose
And stood beside him, trying to compose
Herself, all whipt to quivering, curdled life,
And he, poor fool, misunderstood his
wife

Suddenly, broken through her anxious
grasp,
Her music-kindled love crashed on him
there

Amazed, he felt her fling against him,
 clasp
 Her arms about him, weighing down his
 chair,
 Sobbing out all her hours of despair.
 "Theodore, a woman needs to hear things
 proved.
 Unless you tell me, I feel I'm not loved."

Theodore went under in this tearing
 wave,

He yielded to it, and its headlong flow
 Filled him with all the energy she gave.
 He was a youth again, and this bright
 glow,

This living, vivid joy he had to show
 Her what she was to him. Laughing and
 crying

She asked assurances there's no denying.

Over and over again her questions, till
 He quite convinced her, every now and
 then

She kissed him, shivering as though
 doubting still.

But later when they were composed and
 when

She dared relax her probings, "Lotta-
 chen,"

He asked, "how is it your love has with-
 stood

My inadvertence? I was made of wood."

She told him, and no doubt she meant it
 truly,

That he was sun, and grass, and wind,
 and sky

To her. And even if conscience were un-
 ruly

She salved it by neat sophistries, but why
 Suppose her insincere, it was no lie

She said, for Heinrich was as much forgot
 As though he'd never been within ear-
 shot.

But Theodore's hands in straying and
 caressing

Fumbled against the locket where it lay
 Upon her neck. "What is this thing I'm
 pressing?"

He asked. "Let's bring it to the light of
 day."

He lifted up the locket. "It should stay
 Outside, my Dear. Your mother has good
 taste.

To keep it hidden surely is a waste."

Pity again Charlotta, straight aroused
 Out of her happiness. The locket brought
 A chilly jet of truth upon her, soured
 Under its icy spurting she was caught,
 And choked, and frozen. Suddenly she
 sought

The clasp, but with such art was this con-
 trived

Her fumbling fingers never once arrived

Upon it. Feeling, twisting, round and
 round,

She pulled the chain quite through the
 locket's ring

And still it held. Her neck, encompassed,
 bound,

Chafed at the sliding meshes. Such a
 thing

To hurl her out of joy! A gilded string
 Binding her folly to her, and those curls
 Which lay entwined beneath the clus-
 tered pearls!

Again she tried to break the cord. It
 stood.

"Unclasp it, Theodore," she begged. But
 he

Refused, and being in a happy mood,
 Twitted her with her inefficiency,

Then looking at her very seriously:
 "I think, Charlotta, it is well to have

Always about one what a mother gave.

As she has taken the great pains to send
 This jewel to you from Dresden, it will
 be

Ingratitude if you do not intend
 To carry it about you constantly.

With her fine taste you cannot disagree,
 The locket is most beautifully designed."

He opened it and there the curls were,
 twined.

Charlotta's heart dropped beats like knit-
 ting-stitches.

She burned a moment, flaming; then she
 froze.

Her face was jerked by little, nervous
 twitches,

She heard her husband asking: "What
 are those?"

Put out her hand quickly to interpose,
 But stopped, the gesture half-complete,

astounded

At the calm way the question was pro-
 pounded.

"A pretty fancy, Dear, I do declare.
Indeed I will not let you put it off.
A lovely thought; yours and your mother's
hair!"
Charlotta hid a gasp under a cough.
"Never with my connivance shall you
doff
This charming gift." He kissed her on
the cheek,
And Lotta suffered him, quite crushed
and meek.

When later in their room she lay awake,
Watching the moonlight slip along the
floor,
She felt the chain and wept for
Theodore's sake.
She had loved Heinrich also, and the core
Of truth, unlovely, startled her. Where-
fore
She vowed from now to break this double
life
And see herself only as Theodore's wife.

PART FIFTH

It was no easy matter to convince
Heinrich that it was finished. Hard to
say
That though they could not meet (he
saw her wince)
She still must keep the locket to allay
Suspicion in her husband. She would pay
Him from her savings bit by bit — the
oath
He swore at that was startling to them
both.

Her resolution taken, Frau Altgelt
Adhered to it, and suffered no regret.
She found her husband all that she had
felt
His music to contain. Her days were set
In his as though she were an amulet
Cased in bright gold. She joyed in her
confining;
Her eyes put out her looking-glass with
shining.

Charlotta was so gay that old, dull tasks
Were furbished up to seem like rituals.
She baked and brewed as one who only
asks
The right to serve. Her daily manuals
Of prayer were duties, and her festivals

When Theodore praised some dish, or
frankly said
She had a knack in making up a bed.

So Autumn went, and all the mountains
round
The city glittered white with fallen snow,
For it was Winter. Over the hard ground
Herr Altgelt's footsteps came, each one
a blow.
On the swept flags behind the currant
row
Charlotta stood to greet him. But his lip
Only flicked hers. His Concert-Meister-
ship

Was first again. This evening he had got
Important news. The opera ordered from
Young Mozart was arrived. That old
despot,
The Bishop of Salzburg, had let him
come
Himself to lead it, and the parts, still hot
From copying, had been tried over. Never
Had any music started such a fever.

The orchestra had cheered till they were
hoarse,
The singers clapped and clapped. The
town was made,
With such a great attraction through the
course
Of Carnival time. In what utter shade
All other cities would be left! The trade
In music would all drift here naturally.
In his excitement he forgot his tea.

Lotta was forced to take his cup and
put
It in his hand. But still he rattled on,
Sipping at intervals. The new catgut
Strings he was using gave out such a tone
The "Maestro" had remarked it, and had
gone
Out of his way to praise him. Lotta
smiled,
He was as happy as a little child.

From that day on, Herr Altgelt, more and
more
Absorbed himself in work. Lotta at first
Was patient and well-wishing. But it
wore
Upon her when two weeks had brought
no burst

Of loving from him. Then she feared
the worst;
That his short interest in her was a light
Flared up an instant only in the night.

Idomeneo was the opera's name,
A name that poor Charlotta learnt to
hate.

Herr Altgelt worked so hard he seldom
came

Home for his tea, and it was very late,
Past midnight sometimes, when he
knocked. His state

Was like a flabby orange whose crushed
skin
Is thin with pulling, and all dented in.

He practised every morning and her
heart

Followed his bow. But often she would
sit,

While he was playing, quite withdrawn
apart,

Absently fingering and touching it,
The locket, which now seemed to her a
bit

Of some gone youth. His music drew her
tears,

And through the notes he played, her
dreading ears

Heard Heinrich's voice, saying he had
not changed;

Beer merchants had no ecstasies to take
Their minds off love. So far her thoughts
had ranged

Away from her stern vow, she chanced to
take

Her way, one morning, quite by a mis-
take,

Along the street where Heinrich had his
shop.

What harm to pass it since she should
not stop!

It matters nothing how one day she
met

Him on a bridge, and blushed, and hur-
ried by.

Nor how the following week he stood
to let

Her pass, the pavement narrowing sud-
denly.

How once he took her basket, and once
he

Pulled back a rearing horse who might
have struck

Her with his hoofs. It seemed the oddest
luck

How many times their business took them
each

Right to the other. Then at last he spoke,
But she would only nod, he got no
speech

From her. Next time he treated it in
joke,

And that so lightly that her vow she
broke

And answered. So they drifted into see-
ing

Each other as before. There was no
fleeing.

Christmas was over and the Carnival
Was very near, and tripping from each
tongue

Was talk of the new opera. Each book-
stall

Flaunted it out in bills, what airs were
sung,

What singers hired. Pictures of the
young

"Maestro" were for sale. The town was
mad.

Only Charlotta felt depressed and sad.

Each day now brought a struggle 'twixt
her will

And Heinrich's. 'Twixt her love for
Theodore

And him. Sometimes she wished to kill
Herself to solve her problem. For a score

Of reasons Heinrich tempted her. He
bore

Her moods with patience, and so surely
urged

Himself upon her, she was slowly merged

Into his way of thinking, and to fly
With him seemed easy. But next morn-
ing would

The Stradivarius undo her mood.
Then she would realize that she must
cleave

Always to Theodore. And she would try
To convince Heinrich she should never
leave,

And afterwards she would go home and
grieve.

All thought in Munich centered on the
part
Of January when there would be given
Idomeneo by Wolfgang Mozart.
The twenty-ninth was fixed. And all
seats, even
Those almost at the ceiling, which were
driven
Behind the highest gallery, were sold.
The inches of the theatre went for
gold.

Herr Altgelt was a shadow worn so thin
With work, he hardly printed black be-
hind
The candle. He and his old violin
Made up one person. He was not unkind,
But dazed outside his playing, and the
rind,
The pine and the maple of his fiddle,
guarded
A part of him which he had quite dis-
carded.

It woke in the silence of frost-bright
nights,
In little lights,
Like will-o'-the-wisps flickering, flut-
tering,
Here — there —
Spurting, sputtering,
Fading and lighting,
Together, asunder —
Till Lotta sat up in bed with won-
der,
And the faint grey patch of the
window shone
Upon her sitting there, alone.
For Theodore slept.

The twenty-eighth was last rehearsal day,
'Twas called for noon, so early morning
meant
Herr Altgelt's only time in which to play
His part alone. Drawn like a monk who's
spent
Himself in prayer and fasting, Theodore
went
Into the kitchen, with a weary word
Of cheer to Lotta, careless if she heard.

Lotta heard more than his spoken
word.
She heard the vibrating of strings
and wood.

She was washing the dishes, her
hands all suds,
When the sound began,
Long as the span
Of a white road snaking about a hill.
The orchards are filled
With cherry blossoms at butterfly
poise.
Hawthorn buds are cracking,
And in the distance a shepherd is
clacking
His shears, snip-snipping the wool
from his sloop.
The notes are asleep,
Lying adrift on the air
In level lines
Like sunlight hanging in pines and
pines,
Strung and threaded,
All imbedded
In the blue-green of the hazy pines.
Lines — long, straight lines!
And stems,
Long, straight stems
Pushing up
To the cup of blue, blue sky.
Stems growing misty
With the many of them,
Red-green mist
Of the trees,
And these
Wood-flavoured notes.
The back is maple and the belly is
pine.
The rich notes twine
As though weaving in and out of
leaves,
Broad leaves
Flapping slowly like elephants' ears,
Waving and falling.
Another sound peers
Through little pine fingers,
And lingers, peeping.
Ping! Ping! pizzicato, something is
cheeping.
There is a twittering up in the
branches,
A chirp and a lilt,
And crimson atilt on a swaying twig.
Wings! Wings!
And a little ruffled-out throat which
sings.
The forest bends, tumultuous
With song.
The woodpecker knocks,

And the song-sparrow trills,
 Every fir, and cedar, and yew
 Has a nest or a bird,
 It is quite absurd
 To hear them cutting across each
 other:
 Peewits, and thrushes, and larks, all
 at once,
 And a loud cuckoo is trying to
 smother
 A wood-pigeon perched on a birch,
 "Roo—coo—oo—oo—"
 "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! That's one for
 you!"
 A blackbird whistles, how sharp, how
 shrill!
 And the great trees toss
 And leaves blow down,
 You can almost hear them splash on
 the ground.
 The whistle again:
 It is double and loud!
 The leaves are splashing,
 And water is dashing
 Over those creepers, for they are
 shrouds;
 And men are running up them to
 furl the sails,
 For there is a capful of wind to-day,
 And we are already well under way.
 The deck is aslant in the bubbling
 breeze.
 "Theodore, please.
 Oh, Dear, how you tease!"
 And the boatswain's whistle sounds
 again,
 And the men pull on the sheets:
 "My name is Hanging Johnny,
 Away-i-oh;
 They call me Hanging Johnny,
 So hang, boys, hang."
 The trees of the forest are masts,
 tall masts;
 They are swinging over
 Her and her lover.
 Almost swooning
 Under the ballooning canvas,
 She lies
 Looking up in his eyes
 As he bends farther over.
 Theodore, still her lover!

The suds were dried upon Charlotta's
 hands,
 She leant against the table for support,

Wholly forgotten. Theodore's eyes were
 brands
 Burning upon his music. He stopped
 short.
 Charlotta almost heard the sound of
 bands
 Snapping. She put one hand up to her
 heart,
 Her fingers touched the locket with a
 start.

Herr Altgelt put his violin away
 Listlessly. "Lotta, I must have some rest.
 The strain will be a hideous one to-day.
 Don't speak to me at all. It will be best
 If I am quiet till I go." And lest
 She disobey, he left her. On the stairs
 She heard his mounting steps. What use
 were prayers!

He could not hear, he was not there, for
 she
 Was married to a mummy, a machine.
 Her hand closed on the locket bitterly.
 Before her, on a chair, lay the shagreen
 Case of his violin. She saw the clean
 Sun flash the open clasp. The locket's
 edge
 Cut at her fingers like a pushing wedge.

A heavy cart went by, a distant bell
 Chimed ten, the fire flickered in the grate.
 She was alone. Her throat began to swell
 With sobs. What kept her here, why
 should she wait?
 The violin she had begun to hate
 Lay in its case before her. Here she flung
 The cover open. With the fiddle swung

Over her head, the hanging clock's loud
 ticking
 Caught on her ear. 'Twas slow, and as
 she paused
 The little door in it came open, flicking
 A wooden cuckoo out: "Cuckoo!" It
 caused
 The forest dream to come again.
 "Cuckoo!"
 Smashed on the grate, the violin broke
 in two.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" the clock kept
 striking on;
 But no one listened. Frau Altgelt had
 gone.

THE CROSS-ROADS

A bullet through his heart at dawn. On the table a letter signed with a woman's name. A wind that goes howling round the house, and weeping as in shame. Cold November dawn peeping through the windows, cold dawn creeping over the floor, creeping up his cold legs, creeping over his cold body, creeping across his cold face. A glaze of thin yellow sunlight on the staring eyes. Wind howling through bent branches. A wind which never dies down. Howling, wailing. The gazing eyes glitter in the sunlight. The lids are frozen open and the eyes glitter.

The thudding of a pick on hard earth. A space grinding and crunching. Overhead, branches writhing, winding, interlacing, unwinding, scattering; tortured twinings, tossings, creakings. Wind flinging branches apart, drawing them together, whispering and whining among them. A waning, lopsided moon cutting through black clouds. A stream of pebbles and earth and the empty spade gleams clear in the moonlight, then is rammed again into the black earth. Tramping of feet. Men and horses. Squeaking of wheels.

"Whoa! Ready, Jim?"

"All ready."

Something falls, settles, is still. Suicides have no coffin.

"Give us the stake, Jim. Now."

Pound! Pound!

"He'll never walk. Nailed to the ground."

An ash stick pierces his heart, if it buds the roots will hold him. He is a part of the earth now, clay to clay. Overhead the branches sway, and writhe, and twist in the wind. He'll never walk with a bullet in his heart, and an ash stick nailing him to the cold, black ground.

Six months he lay still. Six months. And the water welled up in his body, and soft blue spots chequered it. He lay still, for the ash stick held him in place. Six months! Then her face came out of a mist of green. Pink and white and frail like Dresden china, lilies-of-the-valley at

her breast, puce-coloured silk sheening about her. Under the young green leaves, the horse at a foot-pace, the high yellow wheels of the chaise scarcely turning, her face, rippling like grain a-blowing, under her puce-coloured bonnet; and burning beside her, flaming within his correct blue coat and brass buttons, is someone. What has dimmed the sun? The horse steps on a rolling stone; a wind in the branches makes a moan. The little leaves tremble and shake, turn and quake, over and over, tearing their stems. There is a shower of young leaves, and a sudden-sprung gale wails in the trees.

The yellow-wheeled chaise is rocking — rocking, and all the branches are knocking — knocking. The sun in the sky is a flat, red plate, the branches creak and grate. She screams and cowers, for the green foliage is a lowering wave surging to smother her. But she sees nothing. The stake holds firm. The body writhes, the body squirms. The blue spots widen, the flesh tears, but the stake wears well in the deep, black ground. It holds the body in the still, black ground.

Two years! The body has been in the ground two years. It is worn away; it is clay to clay. Where the heart moulders, a greenish dust, the stake is thrust. Late August it is, and night; a night flauntingly jewelled with stars, a night of shooting stars and loud insect noises. Down the road to Tilbury, silence — and the slow flapping of large leaves. Down the road to Sutton, silence — and the darkness of heavy-foliaged trees. Down the road to Wayfleet, silence — and the whirring scrape of insects in the branches. Down the road to Edgarstown, silence — and stars like stepping-stones in a path-way overhead. It is very quiet at the cross-roads, and the sign-board points the way down the four roads, endlessly points the way where nobody wishes to go.

A horse is galloping, galloping up from Sutton. Shaking the wide, still leaves as he goes under them. Striking sparks with his iron shoes; silencing the katydid. Dr. Morgan riding to a child-birth over Tilbury way; riding to deliver a woman of her first-born son. One o'clock from Wayfleet bell tower, what a shower of shoot

ing stars! And a breeze all of a sudden, jarring the big leaves and making them jerk up and down. Dr. Morgan's hat is blown from his head, the horse swerves, and curves away from the sign-post. An oath — spurs — a blurring of grey mist. A quick left twist, and the gelding is snorting and racing down the Tilbury road with the wind dropping away behind him.

The stake has wrenched, the stake has started, the body, flesh from flesh, has parted. But the bones hold tight, socket and ball, and clamping them down in the hard, black ground is the stake, wedged through ribs and spine. The bones may twist, and heave, and twine, but the stake holds them still in line. The breeze goes down, and the round stars shine, for the stake holds the fleshless bones in line.

Twenty years now! Twenty long years! The body has powdered itself away; it is clay to clay. It is brown earth mingled with brown earth. Only flaky bones remain, lain together so long they fit, although not one bone is knit to another. The stake is there too, rotted through, but upright still, and still piercing down between ribs and spine in a straight line.

Yellow stillness is on the cross-roads, yellow stillness is on the trees. The leaves hang drooping, wan. The four roads point four yellow ways, saffron and gamboge ribbons to the gaze. A little swirl of dust blows up Tilbury road, the wind which fans it has not strength to do more; it ceases, and the dust settles down. A little whirl of wind comes up Tilbury road. It brings a sound of wheels and feet. The wind reels a moment and faints to nothing under the sign-post. Wind again, wheels and feet louder. Wind again — again — again. A drop of rain, flat into the dust. Drop! — Drop! Thick heavy raindrops, and a shrieking wind bending the great trees and wrenching off their leaves.

Under the black sky, bowed and dripping with rain, up Tilbury road, comes the procession. A funeral procession, bound for the graveyard at Wayfleet. Feet and wheels — feet and wheels. And among them one who is carried.

The bones in the deep, still earth shiver

and pull. There is a quiver through the rotted stake. Then stake and bones fall together in a little puffing of dust.

Like meshes of linked steel the rain shuts down behind the procession, now well along the Wayfleet road.

He wavers like smoke in the buffeting wind. His fingers blow out like smoke, his head ripples in the gale. Under the sign-post, in the pouring rain, he stands, and watches another quivering figure drifting down the Wayfleet road. Then swiftly he streams after it. It flickers among the trees. He licks out and winds about them. Over, under, blown, contorted. Spindrift after spindrift; smoke following smoke. There is a wailing through the trees, a wailing of fear, and after it laughter — laughter — laughter, skirling up to the black sky. Lightning jags over the funeral procession. A heavy clap of thunder. Then darkness and rain, and the sound of feet and wheels.

A ROXBURY GARDEN

I

HOOPS

Blue and pink sashes,
Criss-cross shoes,
Minna and Stella run out into the garden
To play at hoop.

Up and down the garden-paths they race,
In the yellow sunshine,
Each with a big round hoop
White as a stripped willow-wand.

Round and round turn the hoops,
Their diamond whiteness cleaving the
yellow sunshine.

The gravel crunches and squeaks beneath
them,
And a large pebble springs them into the
air

To go whirling for a foot or two
Before they touch the earth again
In a series of little jumps.

Spring, Hoops!
Spit out a shower of blue and white
brightness.

The little criss-cross shoes twinkle behind
you,

The pink and blue sashes flutter like flags,
The hoop-sticks are ready to beat you.
Turn, turn, Hoops! In the yellow sun-
shine.

Turn your stripped willow whiteness
Along the smooth paths.

Stella sings:

"Round and round, rolls my hoop,
Scarcely touching the ground,
With a swoop,
And a bound,
Round and round.
With a bumpety, crunching, scatter-
ing sound,
Down the garden it flies;
In our eyes
The sun lies.
See it spin
Out and in;
Through the paths it goes whirling,
About the beds curling.
Sway now to the loop,
Faster, faster, my hoop.
Round you come,
Up you come,
Quick and straight as before.
Run, run, my hoop, run,
Away from the sun."

And the great hoop bounds along the
path,

Leaping into the wind-bright air.

Minna sings:

"Turn, hoop,
Burn hoop,
Twist and twine
Hoop of mine.
Flash along,
Leap along,
Right at the sun.
Run, hoop, run.
Faster and faster,
Whirl, whirl.
Wheel like fire,
And spin like glass;
Fire's no whiter
Glass is no brighter.
Dance,
Prance,
Over and over,
About and about,
With the top of you under,
And the bottom at top,
But never a stop.

Turn about, hoop, to the tap of my
stick,
I follow behind you
To touch and remind you
Burn and glitter, so white and quick,
Round and round, to the tap of a
stick."

*The hoop flies along between the flower-
beds,
Swaying the flowers with the wind of its
passing.*

Besides the foxglove-border roll the hoops,
And the little pink and white bells shake
and jingle
Up and down their tall spires;
They roll under the snow-ball bush,
And the ground behind them is strewn
with white petals;
They swirl round a corner,
And jar a bee out of a Canterbury bell;
They cast their shadows for an instant
Over a bed of pansies,
Catch against the spurs of a columbine,
Jostle the quietness from a cluster of
monk's-hood.
Pat! Pat! behind them come the little
criss-cross shoes,
And the blue and pink sashes stream out
in flappings of colour.

Stella sings:

"Hoop, hoop,
Roll along,
Faster bowl along,
Hoop.
Slow, to the turning,
Now go! — Go!
Quick!
Here's the stick.
Rat-a-tap-tap it,
Pat it, flap it.
Fly like a bird or a yellow-backed bee,
See how soon you can reach that tree.
Here is a path that is perfectly straight.
Roll along, hoop, or we shall be late."

Minna sings:

"Trip about, slip about, whip about
Hoop.
Wheel like a top at its quickest spin,
Then, dear hoop, we shall surely win.
First to the greenhouse and then to
the wall

Circle and circle,
And let the wind push you,
Poke you,
Brush you,
And not let you fall.
Whirling you round like a wreath of
mist.
Hoopety hoop,
Twist,
Twist."

Tap! Tap! go the hoop-sticks,
And the hoops bowl along under a grape
arbour.

For an instant their willow whiteness is
green,
Pale white-green.
Then they are out in the sunshine,
Leaving the half-formed grape clusters
A-tremble under their big leaves.

"I will beat you, Minna," cries Stella,
Hitting her hoop smartly with her stick.
"Stella, Stella, we are winning," calls

Minna,
As her hoop curves round a bed of clove-
pinks.

A humming-bird whizzes past Stella's ear,
And two or three yellow-and-black butter-
flies

Flutter, startled, out of a pillar rose.

Round and round race the little girls
After their great white hoops.

Suddenly Minna stops.
Her hoop wavers an instant,
But she catches it up on her stick.
"Listen, Stella!"

Both the little girls are listening;
And the scents of the garden rise up
quietly about them.

"It's the chaise! It's Father!
Perhaps he's brought us a book from Bos-
ton."

Twinkle, twinkle, the little criss-cross
shoes

Up the garden path.
Blue—pink—an instant, against the
syringa hedge.

But the hoops, white as stripped willow-
wands,

Lie in the grass,
And the grasshoppers jump back and
forth
Over them.

II

BATTLEDORE AND SHUTTLECOCK

The shuttlecock soars upward
In a parabola of whiteness,
Turns,

And sinks to a perfect arc.
Plat! the battledore strikes it,
And it rises again,
Without haste,
Winged and curving,
Tracing its white flight
Against the clipped hemlock-trees.
Plat!

Up again,
Orange and sparkling with sun,
Rounding under the blue sky,
Dropping,
Fading to grey-green
In the shadow of the coned hemlocks.

"Ninety-one." "Ninety-two." "Ninety-
three."

The arms of the little girls
Come up—and up—
Precisely,
Like mechanical toys.
The battledores beat at nothing,
And toss the dazzle of snow
Off their parchment drums.

"Ninety-four." Plat!
"Ninety-five." Plat!
Back and forth
Goes the shuttlecock,
Icicle-white,
Leaping at the sharp-edged clouds,
Overturning,

Falling,
Down,
And down,
Tinctured with pink
From the upthrusting shine
Of Oriental poppies.

The little girls sway to the counting
rhythm;

Left foot,
Right foot.
Plat! Plat!
Yellow heat twines round the handles of
the battledores,
The parchment cracks with dryness;
But the shuttlecock
Swings slowly into the ice-blue sky,
Heaving up on the warm air

Like a foam-bubble on a wave,
 With feathers slanted and sustaining.
 Higher,
 Until the earth turns beneath it;
 Poised and swinging,
 With all the garden flowing beneath it,
 Scarlet, and blue, and purple, and
 white —
 Blurred colour reflections in rippled
 water —
 Changing — streaming —
 For the moment that Stella takes to lift
 her arm.
 Then the shuttlecock relinquishes,
 Bows,
 Descends;
 And the sharp blue spears of the air
 Thrust it to earth.

Again it mounts,
 Stepping up on the rising scents of
 flowers,
 Buoyed up and under by the shining heat.
 Above the foxgloves,
 Above the guelder-roses,
 Above the greenhouse glitter,
 Till the shafts of cooler air
 Meet it,
 Deflect it,
 Reject it,
 Then down,
 Down,
 Past the greenhouse,
 Past the guelder-rose bush,
 Past the foxgloves.

"Ninety-nine," Stella's battledore springs
 to the impact.
 Plunk! Like the snap of a taut string.
 "Oh! Minnal!"
 The shuttlecock drops zigzaggedly,
 Out of orbit,
 Hits the path,
 And rolls over quite still.
 Dead white feathers,
 With a weight at the end.

III

GARDEN GAMES

The tall clock is striking twelve;
 And the little girls stop in the hall to
 wait it,
 And the big ships rocking in a half-circle

Above the dial.
 Twelve o'clock!
 Down the side steps
 Go the little girls,
 Under their big round straw hats.
 Minna's has a pink ribbon,
 Stella's a blue,
 That is the way they know which is
 which.
 Twelve o'clock!
 An hour yet before dinner.
 Mother is busy in the still-room,
 And Hannah is making gingerbread.
 Slowly, with lagging steps,
 They follow the garden-path,
 Crushing a leaf of box for its acrid smell,
 Discussing what they shall do,
 And doing nothing.

"Stella, see that grasshopper
 Climbing up the bank!
 What a jump!
 Almost as long as my arm."
 Run, children, run.
 For the grasshopper is leaping away,
 In half-circle curves,
 Shuttlecock curves,
 Over the grasses.
 Hand in hand, the little girls call to him:
 "Grandfather, grandfather gray,
 Give me molasses, or I'll throw you
 away."
 The grasshopper leaps into the sunlight,
 Golden-green,
 And is gone.

"Let's catch a bee."
 Round whirl the little girls,
 And up the garden.
 Two heads are thrust among the Canter-
 bury bells,
 Listening,
 And fingers clasp and unclasp behind
 backs
 In a strain of silence.

White bells,
 Blue bells,
 Hollow and reflexed.
 Deep tunnels of blue and white dimness,
 Cool wine-tunnels for bees.
 There is a floundering and buzzing over
 Minna's head.
 "Bend it down, Stella. Quick! Quick!"
 The wide mouth of a blossom

Is pressed together in Minna's fingers.
 The stem flies up, jiggling its flower-bells,
 And Minna holds the dark blue cup in
 her hand,
 With the bee
 Imprisoned in it.
 Whirr! Buzz! Bump!
 Bump! Whizz! Bang!
 BANG!!

The blue flower tears across like paper,
 And a gold-black bee darts away in the
 sunshine.

"If we could fly, we could catch him."
 The sunshine is hot on Stella's upturned
 face,

As she stares after the bee.
 "We'll follow him in a dove chariot.
 Come on, Stella."

Run, children,
 Along the red gravel paths,
 For a bee is hard to catch,
 Even with a chariot of doves.

Tall, still, and cowed,
 Stand the monk's-hoods;
 Taller than the heads of the little girls.
 A blossom for Minna.
 A blossom for Stella.
 Off comes the cowl,
 And there is a purple-painted chariot;
 Off comes the forward petal,
 And there are two little green doves,
 With green traces tying them to the
 chariot.

"Now we will get in, and fly right up to
 the clouds.

Fly, Doves, up in the sky,
 With Minna and me,
 After the bee."

Up one path,
 Down another,
 Run the little girls,
 Holding their dove chariots in front of
 them;
 But the bee is hidden in the trumpet of
 a honeysuckle,
 With his wings folded along his back.

The dove chariots are thrown away,
 And the little girls wander slowly through
 the garden,
 Sucking the salvia tips,
 And squeezing the snapdragons

To make them gape.

"I'm so hot,
 Let's pick a pansy
 And see the little man in his bath,
 And play we're he."
 A royal bath-tub,
 Hung with purple stuffs and yellow.
 The great purple-yellow wings
 Rise up behind the little red and green
 man;

The purple-yellow wings fan him,
 He dabbles his feet in cool green.
 Off with the green sheath,

And there are two spindly legs.

"Heigho!" sighs Minna.

"Heigho!" sighs Stella.

There is not a flutter of wind,
 And the sun is directly overhead.

Along the edge of the garden

Walk the little girls.

Their hats, round and yellow like cheeses,
 Are dangling by the ribbons.

The grass is a tumult of buttercups and
 daisies;

Buttercups and daisies streaming away
 Up the hill.

The garden is purple, and pink, and
 orange, and scarlet;

The garden is hot with colours.

But the meadow is only yellow, and
 white, and green,

Cool, and long, and quiet.

The little girls pick buttercups

And hold them under each other's chins.

"You're as gold as Grandfather's snuff-
 box.

You're going to be very rich, Minna."

"Oh-o-o! Then I'll ask my husband to
 give me a pair of garnet earrings

Just like Aunt Nancy's.

I wonder if he will.

I know. We'll tell fortunes.

That's what we'll do."

Plump down in the meadow grass,

Stella and Minna,

With their round yellow hats,

Like cheeses,

Beside them.

Drop,

Drop,

Daisy petals.

"One I love,

Two I love,

Three I love I say . . ."

The ground is peppered with daisy petals,
And the little girls nibble the golden
centres,
And play it is cake.

A bell rings.
Dinner-time;
And after dinner there are lessons.

1777

I

THE TRUMPET-VINE ARBOUR

The throats of the little red trumpet-
flowers are wide open,
And the clangour of brass beats against
the hot sunlight.
They bray and blare at the burning sky.
Red! Red! Coarse notes of red,
Trumpeted at the blue sky.
In long streaks of sound, molten metal,
The vine declares itself.
Clang! — from its red and yellow trum-
pets.
Clang! — from its long, nasal trumpets,
Splitting the sunlight into ribbons, tat-
tered and shot with noise.

I sit in the cool arbour, in a green-and-
gold twilight.
It is very still, for I cannot hear the
trumpets,
I only know that they are red and open,
And that the sun above the arbour shakes
with heat.
My quill is newly mended,
And makes fine-drawn lines with its point.
Down the long, white paper it makes
little lines,
Just lines — up — down — criss-cross.
My heart is strained out at the pin-point
of my quill;
It is thin and writhing like the marks of
the pen.
My hand marches to a squeaky tunc,
It marches down the paper to a squealing
of fics.
My pen and the trumpet-flowers,
And Washington's armies away over the
smoke-tree to the Southwest.
"Yankee Doodle," my Darling! It is you
against the British,
Marching in your ragged shoes to batter
down King George.

What have you got in your hat? Not a
feather, I wager.

Just a hay-straw, for it is the harvest you
are fighting for.

Hay in your hat, and the whites of their
eyes for a target!

Like Bunker Hill, two years ago, when I
watched all day from the house-top

Through Father's spy-glass.

The red city, and the blue, bright water,
And puffs of smoke which you made.

Twenty miles away,

Round by Cambridge, or over the Neck,
But the smoke was white — white!

To-day the trumpet-flowers are red —
red —

And I cannot see you fighting,

But old Mr. Dimond has fled to Canada,
And Myra sings "Yankee Doodle" at her
milking.

The red throats of the trumpets bray and
clang in the sunshine,

And the smoke-tree puffs dun blossoms
into the blue air.

II

THE CITY OF FALLING LEAVES

Leaves fall,

Brown leaves,

Yellow leaves streaked with brown.

They fall,

Flutter,

Fall again.

The brown leaves,

And the streaked yellow leaves,

Loosen on their branches

And drift slowly downwards.

One,

One, two, three,

One, two, five.

All Venice is a falling of Autumn
leaves —

Brown,

And yellow streaked with brown.

"That sonnet, Abate,

Beautiful,

I am exhausted by it.

Your phrases turn about my heart

And stifle me to swooning.

Open the window, I beg.

Lord! What a strumming of fiddles and
mandolins!

'Tis really a shame to stop indoors.

Call my maid, or I will make you lace me
yourself.

Pic, how hot it is, not a breath of air!
See how straight the leaves are falling.
Marianna, I will have the yellow satin
caught up with silver fringe,
It peeps out delightfully from under a
mantle.

Am I well painted to-day, *caro Abate*
nio?

You will be proud of me at the *Ridotto*,
hey?

Proud of being *Cavalier*' *Servente* to such
a lady?"

"Can you doubt it, *Bellissima Contessa*?
A pinch more rouge on the right cheek,
And *Venus* herself shines less . . ."

"You bore me, *Abate*,
I vow I must change you!
A letter, *Achmet*?

Run and look out of the window, *Abate*.
I will read my letter in peace."

The little black slave with the yellow
satin turban

Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.
His yellow turban and black skin
Are gorgeous — barbaric.

The yellow satin dress with its silver
flashings

Lies on a chair
Beside a black mantle and a black mask.

Yellow and black,
Gorgeous — barbaric.

The lady reads her letter,
And the leaves drift slowly
Past the long windows.

"How silly you look, my dear *Abate*,
With that great brown leaf in your wig.
Pluck it off, I beg you,
Or I shall die of laughing."

A yellow wall

Affare in the sunlight,
Chequered with shadows,
Shadows of vine leaves,
Shadows of masks,

Masks coming, printing themselves for an
instant,

Then passing on,
More masks always replacing them.

Masks with tricornes and rapiers sticking
out behind

Pursuing masks with plumes and high
heels,

The sunlight shining under their insteps.

One,

One, two,

One, two, three,

There is a thronging of shadows on the
hot wall,

Filigreed at the top with moving leaves,
Yellow sunlight and black shadows,
Yellow and black,

Gorgeous — barbaric.

Two masks stand together,

And the shadow of a leaf falls through
them,

Marking the wall where they are not.

From hat-tip to shoulder-tip,

From elbow to sword-hilt,

The leaf falls.

The shadows mingle,

Blur together,

Slide along the wall and disappear.

Gold of mosaics and candles,

And night blackness lurking in the ceiling
beams.

Saint Mark's glitters with flames and re-
flections.

A cloak brushes aside,

And the yellow of satin

Licks out over the coloured inlays of the
pavement.

Under the gold crucifixes

There is a meeting of hands

Reaching from black mantles.

Sighing embraces, bold investigations,

Hide in confessionals,

Sheltered by the shuffling of feet.

Gorgeous — barbaric

In its mail of jewels and gold,

Saint Mark's looks down at the swarm
of black masks;

And outside in the palace gardens brown
leaves fall,

Flutter,

Fall,

Brown,

And yellow streaked with brown.

Blue-black, the sky over Venice,

With a pricking of yellow stars.

There is no moon,

And the waves push darkly against the
prow

Of the gondola,

Coming from Malamocco

And streaming toward Venice.

It is black under the gondola hood,

But the yellow of a satin dress
 Glares out like the eye of a watching
 tiger.
 Yellow compassed about with darkness,
 Yellow and black,
 Gorgeous — barbaric.
 The boatman sings,
 It is Tasso that he sings;
 The lovers seek each other beneath their
 mantles,

And the gondola drifts over the lagoon,
 aslant to the coming dawn.
 But at Malamocco in front,
 In Venice behind,
 Fall the leaves,
 Brown,
 And yellow streaked with brown.
 They fall,
 Flutter,
 Fall.

BRONZE TABLETS

THE FRUIT SHOP

Cross-ribboned shoes; a muslin gown,
 High-waisted, girdled with bright blue;
 A straw poke bonnet which hid the frown
 She plucked her little brows into
 As she picked her dainty passage through
 The dusty street. "Ah, Mademoiselle,
 A dirty pathway, we need rain,
 My poor fruits suffer, and the shell
 Of this nut's too big for its kernel, lain
 Here in the sun it has shrunk again.
 The baker down at the corner says
 We need a battle to shake the clouds;
 But I am a man of peace, my ways
 Don't look to the killing of men in crowds.
 Poor fellows with guns and bayonets for
 shrouds!
 Pray, Mademoiselle, come out of the sun.
 Let me dust off that wicker chair. It's
 cool
 In here, for the green leaves I have run
 In a curtain over the door, make a pool
 Of shade. You see the pears on that
 stool —
 The shadow keeps them plump and fair."
 Over the fruiterer's door, the leaves
 Held back the sun, a greenish flare
 Quivered and sparked the shop, the
 sheaves
 Of sunbeams, glanced from the sign on
 the caves,
 Shot from the golden letters, broke
 And splintered to little scattered lights.
 Jeanne Tourmont entered the shop, her
 poke
 Bonnet tilted itself to rights,
 And her face looked out like the moon on
 nights
 Of flickering clouds. "Monsieur Popain, I

Want gooseberries, an apple or two,
 Or excellent plums, but not if they're
 high;
 Haven't you some which a strong wind
 blew?
 I've only a couple of francs for you."
 Monsieur Popain shrugged and rubbed his
 hands.
 What could he do, the times were sad.
 A couple of francs and such demands!
 And asking for fruits a little bad.
 Wind-blown indeed! He never had
 Anything else than the very best.
 He pointed to baskets of blunted pears
 With the thin skin tight like a bursting
 vest,
 All yellow, and red, and brown, in smears.
 Monsieur Popain's voice denoted tears.
 He took up a pear with tender care,
 And pressed it with his hardened thumb.
 "Smell it, Mademoiselle, the perfume
 there
 Is like lavender, and sweet thoughts come
 Only from having a dish at home.
 And those grapes! They melt in the
 mouth like wine,
 Just a click of the tongue, and they burst
 to honey.
 They're only this morning off the vine,
 And I paid for them down in silver money.
 The Corporal's widow is witness, her pony
 Brought them in at sunrise to-day.
 Those oranges — Gold! They're almost
 red.
 They seem little chips just broken away
 From the sun itself. Or perhaps instead
 You'd like a pomegranate, they're rarely
 gay,
 When you split them the seeds are like
 crimson spray.

Yes, they're high, they're high, and those
 Turkey figs,
 They all come from the South, and Nel-
 son's ships
 Make it a little hard for our rigs
 They must be forever giving the ships
 To the cursed English, and when men
 clips
 Through powder to bring them, why
 dainties mounts
 A bit in price Those almonds now,
 I'll strip off that husk, when one dis-
 counts
 A life or two in a nigger row
 With the man who grew them, it does
 seem how
 They would come dear, and then the
 fight
 At sea perhaps, our boats have heels
 And mostly they sail along at night,
 But once in a way they're caught, one
 feels
 Ivory's not better nor finer — why peels
 From an almond kernel are worth two
 sous
 It's hard to sell them now," he sighed
 "Purses are tight, but I shall not lose
 There's plenty of cheaper things to
 choose"
 He picked some currants out of a wide
 Earthen bowl "They make the tongue
 Almost fly out to suck them, bride
 Currants they are, they were planted
 long
 Ago for some new Marquise, among
 Other great beauties, before the Château
 Was left to rot Now the Gardener's
 wife,
 He that marched off to his death at Ma-
 renco,
 Sells them to me, she keeps her life
 From snuffing out, with her pruning
 knife
 She's a poor old thing, but she learnt the
 trade
 When her man was young, and the young
 Marquis
 Couldn't have enough garden The flow-
 ers he made
 All new! And the fruits! But 'twas said
 that he
 Was no friend to the people, and so they
 laid
 Some charge against him, a cavalcade
 Of citizens took him away, they meant

Well, but I think there was some mis-
 take
 He just potted round in his garden, bent
 On growing things, we were so awake
 In those days for the New Republic's
 sake
 He's gone, and the garden is all that's
 left
 Not in ruin, but the currants and apr-
 cots,
 And peaches, furred and sweet, with a
 cleft
 Full of morning dew, in those green
 glazed pots,
 Why, Mademoiselle, there is never an elf
 Or worm among them, and as for theft,
 How the old woman keeps them I cannot
 say,
 But they're finer than any grown this
 way"
 Jeanne Tourmont drew back the filigree
 ring
 Of her striped silk purse, tipped it upside
 down
 And shook it, two coins fell with a ding
 Of striking silver, beneath her gown
 One rolled, the other lay, a thing
 Sparked white and sharply glistening,
 In a drop of sunlight between two
 shades
 She jerked the purse, took its empty
 ends
 And crumpled them toward the centre
 braids
 The whole collapsed to a mass of blends
 Of colours and stripes "Monsieur Po-
 pain, friends
 We have always been In the days be-
 fore
 The Great Revolution my aunt was kind
 When you needed help You need no
 more,
 'Tis we now who must beg at your door,
 And will you refuse?" The little man
 Bustled, denied, his heart was good,
 But times were hard He went to a
 pan
 And poured upon the counter a flood
 Of pungent raspberries, tanged like wood
 He took a melon with rough green rind
 And rubbed it well with his apron tip
 Then he hunted over the shop to find
 Some walnuts cracking at the lip,
 And added to these a barberry slip
 Whose acid, oval berries hung

Like fringe and trembled. He reached
a round

Basket, with handles, from where it
swung

Against the wall, laid it on the ground
And filled it, then he searched and found
The francs Jeanne Tournont had let fall.
"You'll return the basket, Mademoi-
selle?"

She smiled, "The next time that I call,
Monsieur. You know that very well."

'Twas lightly said, but meant to tell.
Monsieur Popain bowed, somewhat
abashed.

She took her basket and stepped out.
The sunlight was so bright it flashed
Her eyes to blindness, and the rout
Of the little street was all about.
Through glare and noise she stumbled,
dazed.

The heavy basket was a care.
She heard a shout and almost grazed
The panels of a chaise and pair.
The postboy yelled, and an amazed
Face from the carriage window gazed.
She jumped back just in time, her heart
Beating with fear. Through whirling
light

The chaise departed, but her smart
Was keen and bitter. In the white
Dust of the street she saw a bright
Streak of colours, wet and gay,
Red like blood. Crushed but fair,
Her fruit stained the cobbles of the way.
Monsieur Popain joined her there.

"Tiens, Mademoiselle,
c'est le Général Bonaparte, partant
pour la Guerre!"

MALMAISON

I

How the slates of the roof sparkle in
the sun, over there, over there, beyond
the high wall! How quietly the Seine
runs in loops and windings, over there,
over there, sliding through the green
countryside! Like ships of the line, stately
with canvas, the tall clouds pass along
the sky, over the glittering roof, over the
trees, over the looped and curving river.
A breeze quivers through the linden-
trees. Roses bloom at Malmaison. Roses!
Roses! But the road is dusty. Already
the Citoyenne Beauharnais wearies of

her walk. Her skin is chalked and pow-
dered with dust, she snuffs dust, and
behind the wall are roses! Roses with
smooth open petals, poised above rip-
pling leaves . . . Roses . . . They have
told her so. The Citoyenne Beauharnais
shrugs her shoulders and makes a little
face. She must mend her pace if she
would be back in time for dinner. Roses
indeed! The guillotine more likely.

The tiered clouds float over Malmai-
son, and the slate roof sparkles in the
sun.

II

Gallop! Gallop! The General brooks
no delay. Make way, good people, and
scatter out of his path, you, and your
hens, and your dogs, and your children.
The General is returned from Egypt, and
is come in a *calèche* and four to visit
his new property. Throw open the gates,
you, Porter of Malmaison. Pull off your
cap, my man, this is your master, the
husband of Madame. Faster! Faster!
A jerk and a jingle and they are arrived,
he and she. Madame has red eyes. Fiel
It is for joy at her husband's return.
Learn your place, Porter. A gentleman
here for two months? Fiel Fie, then!
Since when have you taken to gossiping.
Madame may have a brother, I suppose.
That—all green, and red, and glitter,
with flesh as dark as ebony—that is a
slave; a blood-thirsty, stabbing, slashing
heathen, come from the hot countries
to cure your tongue of idle whispering.

A fine afternoon it is, with tall bright
clouds sailing over the trees.

"Bonaparte, *mon ami*, the trees are
golden like my star, the star I pinned
to your destiny when I married you. The
gypsy, you remember her prophecy! My
dear friend, not here, the servants are
watching; send them away, and that
flashing splendour, Roustan. Superb—
Imperial, but . . . My dear, your arm
is trembling; I faint to feel it touching
me! No, no, Bonaparte, not that—
spare me that—did we not bury that
last night! You hurt me, my friend, you

are so hot and strong. Not long, Dear, no, thank God, not long."

The looped river runs saffron, for the sun is setting. It is getting dark. Dark. Darker. In the moonlight, the slate roof shines palely milkily white.

The roses have faded at Malmaison, nipped by the frost. What need for roses? Smooth, open petals — her arms. Fragrant, outcurved petals — her breasts. He rises like a sun above her, stooping to touch the petals, press them wider. Eagles. Bees. What are they to open roses! A little shivering breeze runs through the linden-trees, and the tiered clouds blow across the sky like ships of the line, stately with canvas.

III

The gates stand wide at Malmaison, stand wide all day. The gravel of the avenue glints under the continual rolling of wheels. An officer gallops up with his sabre clicking; a mameluke gallops down with his charger kicking. *Valets de pied* run about in ones, and twos, and groups, like swirled blown leaves. Tramp! Tramp! The guard is changing, and the grenadiers off duty lounge out of sight, ranging along the roads toward Paris.

The slate roof sparkles in the sun, but it sparkles milkily, vaguely, the great glass-houses put out its shining. Glass, stone, and onyx now for the sun's mirror. Much has come to pass at Malmaison. New rocks and fountains, blocks of carved marble, fluted pillars uprearing antique temples, vases and urns in unexpected places, bridges of stone, bridges of wood, arbours and statues, and a flood of flowers everywhere, new flowers, rare flowers, parterre after parterre of flowers. Indeed, the roses bloom at Malmaison. It is youth, youth untrammelled and advancing, trundling a country ahead of it as though it were a hoop. Laughter, and spur janglings in tessellated vestibules. Tripping of clocked and embroidered stockings in little low-heeled shoes over smooth grass-plots. India muslins spangled with silver patterns slide through trees — mingle — separate — white day fireflies flashing moon-brilliance in the shade of foliage.

"The kangaroos! I vow, Captain, I must see the kangaroos."

"As you please, dear Lady, but I recommend the shady linden alley and feeding the cockatoos."

"They say that Madame Bonaparte's breed of sheep is the best in all France."

"And, oh, have you seen the enchanting little cedar she planted when the First Consul sent home the news of the victory of Marengo?"

Picking, choosing, the chattering company flits to and fro. Over the trees the great clouds go, tiered, stately, like ships of the line bright with canvas.

Prisoners'-base, and its swooping, veering, racing, giggling, bumping. The First Consul runs plump into M. de Beauharnais and falls. But he picks himself up smartly, and starts after M. Isabey. Too late, M. Le Premier Consul, Madame Hortense is out after you. Quickly, my dear Sir! Stir your short legs, she is swift and eager, and as graceful as her mother. She is there, that other, playing too, but lightly, warily, bearing herself with care, rather floating out upon the air than running, never far from goal. She is there, borne up above her guests as something indefinitely fair, a rose above periwinkles. A blown rose, smooth as satin, reflexed, one loosened petal hanging back and down. A rose that undulates languorously as the breeze takes it, resting upon its leaves in a faintness of perfume.

There are rumours about the First Consul. Malmaison is full of women, and Paris is only two leagues distant. Madame Bonaparte stands on the wooden bridge at sunset, and watches a black swan pushing the pink and silver water in front of him as he swims, crinkling its smoothness into pleats of changing colour with his breast. Madame Bonaparte presses against the parapet of the bridge, and the crushed roses at her belt melt, petal by petal, into the pink water.

IV

A vile day, Porter. But keep your wits about you. The Empress will soon be here. Quercy, without the Emperor! It

is indeed, but best not consider that. Scratch your head and prick up your ears. Divorce is not for you to debate about. She is late? Ah, well, the roads are muddy. The rain spears are as sharp as whetted knives. They dart down and down, edged and shining. Clop-trop! Clop-trop! A carriage grows out of the mist. First, Porter. You can keep on your hat. It is only Her Majesty's dogs and her parrot. Clop-trop! The Ladies in Waiting, Porter. Clop-trop! It is Her Majesty. At least, I suppose it is, but the blinds are drawn.

"In all the years I have served Her Majesty she never before passed the gate without giving me a smile!"

You're a droll fellow, to expect the Empress to put out her head in the pouring rain and salute you. She has affairs of her own to think about.

Clang the gate, no need for further waiting, nobody else will be coming to Malmaison to-night.

White under her veil, drained and shaking, the woman crosses the ante-chamber. Empress! Empress! Foolish splendour, perished to dust. Ashes of roses, ashes of youth. Empress forsooth!

Over the glass domes of the hot-houses drenches the rain. Behind her a clock ticks—ticks again. The sound knocks upon her thought with the echoing shudder of hollow vases. She places her hands on her ears, but the minutes pass, knocking. Tears in Malmaison. And years to come each knocking by, minute after minute. Years, many years, and tears, and cold pouring rain.

"I feel as though I had died, and the only sensation I have is that I am no more."

Rain! Heavy, thudding rain!

V

The roses bloom at Malmaison. And not only roses. Tulips, myrtles, geraniums, camelias, rhododendrons, dahlias, double hyacinths. All the year through, under glass, under the sky, flowers bud, expand, die, and give way to others, always others. From distant countries they have been brought, and taught to live in

the cool temperateness of France. There is the *Bonapartea* from Peru; the *Napoleone Impériale*; the *Josephinia Imperatrix*, a pearl-white flower, purple-shadowed, the calix pricked out with crimson points. Malmaison wears its flowers as a lady wears her gems, flauntingly, assertively. Malmaison decks herself to hide the hollow within.

The glass-houses grow and grow, and every year fling up hotter reflections to the sailing sun.

The cost runs into millions, but a woman must have something to console herself for a broken heart. One can play backgammon and patience, and then patience and backgammon, and stake gold napolcons on each game won. Sport truly! It is an unruly spirit which could ask better. With her jewels, her laces, her shawls; her two hundred and twenty dresses, her fichus, her veils; her pictures, her busts, her birds. It is absurd that she cannot be happy. The Emperor smarts under the thought of her ingratitude. What could he do more? And yet she spends, spends as never before. It is ridiculous. Can she not enjoy life at a smaller figure? Was ever monarch plagued with so extravagant an ex-wife. She owes her chocolate-merchant, her candle-merchant, her sweetmeat purveyor; her grocer, her butcher, her poulterer; her architect, and the shopkeeper who sells her rouge; her perfumer, her dressmaker, her merchant of shoes. She owes for fans, plants, engravings, and chairs. She owes masons and carpenters, vintners, *lingères*. The lady's affairs are in sad confusion.

And why? Why?

Can a river flow when the spring is dry?

Night. The Empress sits alone, and the clock ticks, one after one. The clock nicks off the edges of her life. She is chipped like an old bit of china; she is frayed like a garment of last year's wearing. She is soft, crinkled, like a fading rose. And each minute flows by brushing against her, shearing off another and another petal. The Empress crushes her breasts with her hands and weeps. And the tall clouds sail over Malmaison like a procession of stately ships bound for the moon.

Scarlet, clear-blue, purple epanletted with gold. It is a parade of soldiers sweeping up the avenue. Eight horses, eight Imperial harnesses, four caparisoned postillions, a carriage with the Emperor's arms on the panels. Ho, Porter, pop out your eyes, and no wonder. Where else under the Heavens could you see such splendour!

They sit on a stone seat. The little man in the green coat of a Colonel of Chasseurs, and the lady, beautiful as a satin seed-pod, and as pale. The house has memories. The satin seed-pod holds his germs of Empire. We will stay here, under the blue sky and the turreted white clouds. She draws him; he feels her faded loveliness urge him to replenish it. Her soft transparent texture woos his nervous fingering. He speaks to her of debts, of resignation; of her children, and his; he promises that she shall see the King of Rome; he says some harsh things and some pleasant. But she is there, close to him, rose toned to amber, white shot with violet, pungent to his nostrils as embalmed rose-leaves in a twilight room.

Suddenly the Emperor calls his carriage and rolls away across the looping Seine.

VI

Crystal-blue brightness over the glass-houses. Crystal-blue streaks and ripples over the lake. A macaw on a gilded perch screams; they have forgotten to take out his dinner. The windows shake. Boom! Boom! It is the rumbling of Prussian cannon beyond Pecq. Roses bloom at Malmaison. Roses! Roses! Swimming above their leaves, rotting beneath them. Fallen flowers strew the unraked walks. Fallen flowers for a fallen Emperor! The General in charge of him draws back and watches. Snatches of music — snarling, sneering music of bagpipes. They say a Scotch regiment is besieging Saint-Denis. The Emperor wipes his face, or is it his eyes. His tired eyes which see nowhere the grace they long for. Josephine! Somebody asks him a question, he does not answer, somebody else does that. There are voices, but one voice he does not hear, and yet he hears

it all the time. Josephine! The Emperor puts up his hand to screen his face. The white light of a bright cloud spears sharply through the linden-trees. *Vive l'Empereur!* There are troops passing beyond the wall, troops which sing and call. Boom! A pink rose is jarred off its stem and falls at the Emperor's feet.

"Very well. I go." Where! Does it matter? There is no sword to clatter. Nothing but soft brushing gravel and a gate which shuts with a click.

"Quick, fellow, don't spare your horses."

A whip cracks, wheels turn, why burn one's eyes following a fleck of dust.

VII

Over the slate roof tall clouds, like ships of the line, pass above the sky. The glass-houses glitter splotchily, for many of their lights are broken. Roses bloom, fiery cinders quenching under damp weeds. Wreckage and misery, and a trailing of petty deeds smearing over old recollections.

The musty rooms are empty and their shutters are closed, only in the gallery there is a stuffed black swan, covered with dust. When you touch it, the feathers come off and float softly to the ground. Through a chink in the shutters, one can see the stately clouds crossing the sky toward the Roman arches of the Marly Aqueduct.

THE HAMMERS

I

FRINDSBURY, KENT, 1786

Bang!

Bang!

Tap!

Tap-a-tap! Rap!

All through the lead and silver Winter days,

All through the copper of Autumn hazes.

Tap to the red rising sun,

Tap to the purple setting sun.

Four years pass before the job is done.

Two thousand oak trees grown and felled,

Two thousand oaks from the hedgerows of the Weald,

Sussex has yielded two thousand oaks
With huge boles
Round which the tape rolls
Thirty mortal feet, say the village folks.
Two hundred loads of elm and Scottish
fir;

Planking from Dantzig.
My! What timber goes into a ship!
Tap! Tap!
Two years they have seasoned her ribs on
the ways,

Tapping, tapping.
You can hear, though there's nothing
where you gaze.

Through the fog down the reaches of the
river,

The tapping goes on like heart-beats in
a fever.

The church-bells chime
Hours and hours,
Dropping days in showers.

Bang! Rap! Tap!
Go the hammers all the time.
They have planked up her timbers
And the nails are driven to the head;
They have decked her over,
And again, and again.
The shoring-up beams shudder at the
strain.

Black and blue breeches,
Pigtails bound and shining:
Like ants crawling about,
The hull swarms with carpenters, running
in and out.

Joiners, calkers,
And they are all terrible talkers.
Jem Wilson has been to sea and he tells
some wonderful tales

Of whales, and spice islands,
And pirates off the Barbary coast.
He boasts magnificently, with his mouth
full of nails.

Stephen Pibold has a tenor voice,
He shifts his quid of tobacco and sings:
"The second in command was bleary-
eyed Ned:

While the surgeon his limb was a-
lopping,

A nine-pounder came and smack went
his head,

Pull away, pull away, pull away! I
say;

Rare news for my Meg of Wapping!"
Every Sunday
People come in crowds

(After church-time, of course)
In curricles, and gigs, and wagons,
And some have brought cold chicken and
flagons

Of wine,
And beer in stoppered jugs.
"Dear! Dear! But I tell 'ee 'twill be a
fine ship.
There's none finer in any of the slips at
Chatham."

The third Summer's roses have started in
to blow,

When the fine stern carving is begun.
Flutings, and twinings, and long slow
swirls,

Bits of deal shaved away to thin spiral
curls.

Tap! Tap! A cornucopia is nailed into
place.

Rap-a-tap! They are putting up a railing
filigreed like Irish lacc.

The Three Towns' people never saw such
grace.

And the paint on it! The richest gold
leaf!

Why, the glitter when the sun is shining
passes belief.

And that row of glass windows tipped to-
ward the sky

Are rubies and carbuncles when the day
is dry.

Oh, my! Oh, my!
They have coppered up the bottom,
And the copper nails
Stand about and sparkle in big wooden
pails.

Bang! Clash! Bang!
"And he swigg'd, and Nick swigg'd,
And Ben swigg'd, and Dick swigg'd,
And I swigg'd, and all of us swigg'd it,
And swore there was nothing like
grog."

It seems they sing,
Even though coppering is not an easy
thing.

What a splendid specimen of humanity
is a true British workman,

Say the people of the Three Towns,
As they walk about the dockyard

To the sound of the evening church-bells.
And so artistic, too, each one tells his
neighbour.

What immense taste and labour!
Miss Jessie Prime, in a pink silk bonnet,

Titters with delight as her eyes fall upon
 it,
 When she steps lightly down from
 Lawyer Green's whisky;
 Such amazing beauty makes one feel
 frisky,
 She explains.
 Mr. Nichols says he is delighted
 (He is the firm);
 His work is all required
 If Miss Jessie can approve.
 Miss Jessie answers that the ship is "a
 love."
 The sides are yellow as marigold,
 The port-lids are red when the ports are
 up;
 Blood-red squares like an even chequer
 Of yellow asters and portulaca.
 There is a wide "black strake" at the
 waterline
 And above is a blue like the sky when
 the weather is fine.
 The inner bulwarks are painted red.
 "Why?" asks Miss Jessie. "'Tis a horrid
 note."
 Mr. Nichols clears his throat,
 And tells her the launching date is set.
 He says, "Be careful, the paint is wet."
 But Miss Jessie has touched it, her
 sprigged muslin gown
 Has a blood-red streak from the shoulder
 down.
 "It looks like blood," says Miss Jessie
 with a frown.

Tap! Tap! Rap!
 An October day, with waves running in
 blue-white lines and a capful of
 wind.
 Three broad flags ripple out behind
 Where the masts will be:
 Royal Standard at the main,
 Admiralty flag at the fore,
 Union Jack at the mizzen.
 The hammers tap harder, faster,
 They must finish by noon.
 The last nail is driven.
 But the wind has increased to half a
 gale,
 And the ship shakes and quivers upon
 the ways.
 The Commissioner of Chatham Dock-
 yard is coming
 In his ten-oared barge from the King's
 Stairs;

The Marine's band will play "God Save
 Great George Our King,"
 And there is to be a dinner afterwards at
 the Crown, with speeches.
 The wind screeches, and flaps the flags
 till they pound like hammers.
 The wind hums over the ship,
 And slips round the dog-shores,
 Jostling them almost to falling.
 There is no time now to wait for Com-
 missioners and marine bands.
 Mr. Nichols has a bottle of port in his
 hands.
 He leans over, holding his hat, and shouts
 to the men below:
 "Let her go!"
 Bang! Bang! Pound!
 The dog-shores fall to the ground,
 And the ship slides down the greased
 planking.
 A splintering of glass,
 And port wine running all over the white
 and copper stem timbers.
 "Success to his Majesty's ship, the Bel-
 lerophon!"
 And the red wine washes away in the
 waters of the Medway.

II

PARIS, MARCH, 1814

Fine yellow sunlight down the rue du
 Mont Thabor.
 Ten o'clock striking from all the clock-
 towers of Paris.
 Over the door of a shop, in gilt letters:
 "Martin — *Parfumeur*," and something
 more.
 A large gilded wooden something.
 Listen! What a ringing of hammers!
 Tap!
 Tap!
 Squeak!
 Tap! Squeak! Tap-a-tap!
 "Blaise."
 "Oui, M'sieu."
 "Don't touch the letters. My name
 stays."
 "Bien, M'sieu."
 "Just take down the eagle, and the shield
 with the bees."
 "As M'sieu pleases."
 Tap! Squeak! Tap!
 The man on the ladder hammers steadily
 for a minute or two,

Then stops
 "He! Patron!
 They are fastened well, *Nom d'un Chien!*
 What if I break them?"
 "Break away,
 You and Paul must have them down
 to day"
 "Bien"
 And the hammers start again,
 Drum beating at the something of gilded
 wood
 Sunshine in a golden flood
 Lighting up the yellow fronts of houses,
 Glittering each window to a flash
 Squeak! Squeak! Tap!
 The hammers beat and rap
 A Prussian hussar on a grey horse goes
 by at a dash
 From other shops, the noise of striking
 blows
 Pounds, thumps, and whacks,
 Wooden sounds splinters — cracks
 Paris is full of the galloping of horses and
 the knocking of hammers
 'Hullo! Friend Martin, is business slack
 That you are in the street this morning?
 Don't turn your back
 And scuttle into your shop like a rabbit
 to its hole
 I've just been taking a stroll
 The stinking Cossacks are bivouacked all
 up and down the Champs Elysees
 I can't get the smell of them out of my
 nostrils
 Dirty fellows, who don't believe in frills
 Like washing Ah, *mon vieux*, you'd have
 to go
 Out of business if you lived in Russia. So!
 We've given up being perfumers to the
 Emperor, have we?
 Blaise,
 Be careful of the hen,
 Maybe I can find a use for her one of
 these days
 That eagle's rather well cut, Martin.
 But I'm sick of smelling Cossack,
 Take me inside and let me put my head
 into a stack
 Oforris root and musk"
 Within the shop, the light is dimmed to
 a pearl and green dusk
 Out of which dreamily sparkle counters
 and shelves of glass,
 Containing phials, and bowls, and jars,
 and dishes, a mass

Of aqueous transparence made solid by
 threads of gold
 Gold and glass,
 And scents which whiff across the green
 twilight and pass
 The perfumer sits down and shakes his
 head
 "Always the same, Monsieur Antoine,
 You artists are wonderful folk indeed."
 But Antoine Vernet does not heed
 He is reading the names on the bottles
 and bowls,
 Done in fine gilt letters with wonderful
 scrolls
 "What have we here? 'Eau Impérial
 Odontalgique'
 I must say, *mon cher*, your names are
 chic
 But it won't do, positively it will not
 do
 Elba doesn't count Ah, here is another
 'Baume du Commandeur' That's better.
 He needs something to smother
 Regrets A little lubricant, too,
 Might be useful I have it,
 'Sage Oil,' perhaps he'll be good now,
 with it we'll submit
 This fine German rouge. I fear he is
 pale"
 "Monsieur Antoine, don't rail
 At misfortune He treated me well and
 fairly"
 "And you prefer him to Bourbons, admit
 it squarely"
 "Heaven forbid!" Bang! Whack!
 Squeak! Squeak! Crack!
 CRASH!
 "Oh, Lord, Martin! That shield is hash
 The whole street is covered with golden
 bees
 They look like so many yellow peas,
 Lying there in the mud I'd like to paint
 it
 'Plum pudding of Empire' That's rather
 quaint, it
 Might take with the Kings Shall I try?"
 "Oh, Sir,
 You distress me, you do" "Poor old
 Martin's purr!
 But he hasn't a scratch in him, I know
 Now let us get back to the powders and
 patches
 Foolish man,
 The Kings are here now We must hit
 on a plan

To change all these titles as fast as we can.

'*Bouquet Impératrice.*' Tut! Tut! Give me some ink —

'*Bouquet de la Reine,*' what do you think? Not the same receipt?

Now, Martin, put away your conceit.

Who will ever know?

'Extract of Nobility' — excellent, since most of them are killed."

"But, Monsieur Antoine — "

"You are self-willed,

Martin. You need a salve

For your conscience, do you?

Very well, we'll halve

The compliments, also the pastes and dentifrices;

Send some to the Kings, and some to the Empresses.

'Oil of Bitter Almonds' — the Empress Josephine can have that.

'Oil of Parma Violets' fits the other one pat."

Rap! Rap! Bang!

"What a hideous clatter!

Blaise seems determined to batter

That poor old turkey into bits,

And pound to jelly my excellent wits.

Come, come, Martin, you mustn't shirk.

"The night cometh soon' — etc. Don't jerk

Me up like that. '*Essence de la Val-
lière* —

That has a charmingly Bourbon air.

And, oh! Magnificent! Listen to this! —

'*Vinaigre des Quatre Voleurs.*' Nothing amiss

With that — England, Austria, Russia, and Prussia!

Martin, you're a wonder,

Upheavals of continents can't keep you under."

"Monsieur Antoine, I am grieved indeed At such levity. What France has gone through — "

"Very true, Martin, very true,

But never forget that a man must feed."

Pound! Pound! Thump!

Pound!

"Look here, in another minute Blaise will drop that bird on the ground."

Martin shrugs his shoulders. "Ah, well, what then? — "

Antoine, with a laugh: "I'll give you two sous for that antiquated hen."

The Imperial Eagle sells for two sous,
And the lilies go up.

A man must choose!

III

PARIS, APRIL, 1814

Cold, impassive, the marble arch of the Place du Carrousel.

Haughty, contemptuous, the marble arch of the Place du Carrousel.

Like a woman raped by force, rising above her fate,

Borne up by the cold rigidity of hate,
Stands the marble arch of the Place du Carrousel.

Tap! Clink-a-tink!

Tap! Rap! Chink!

What falls to the ground like a streak of flame?

Hush! It is only a bit of bronze flashing in the sun.

What are all those soldiers? Those are not the uniforms of France.

Alas! No! The uniforms of France, Great Imperial France, are done.

They will rot away in chests and hang to dusty tatters in barn lofts.

These are other armies. And their name?

Hush, be still for shame;

Be still and imperturbable like the marble arch.

Another bright spark falls through the blue air.

Over the Place du Carrousel a wailing of despair.

Crowd your horses back upon the people, Uhlans and Hungarian Lancers,

They see too much.

Unfortunately, Gentlemen of the Invading Armies, what they do not see, they hear.

Tap! Clink-a-tink!

Tap!

Another sharp spear

Of brightness,

And a ringing of quick metal lightness

On hard stones.

Workmen are chipping off the names of Napoleon's victories

From the triumphal arch of the Place du Carrousel.

Do they need so much force to quell the crowd?

An old Grenadier of the line groans
aloud,
And each hammer tap points the sob of a
woman.

Russia, Prussia, Austria, and the faded-
white-lily Bourbon king

Think it well

To guard against tumult,
A mob is an undependable thing.

Ding! Ding!

Vienna is scattered all over the Place du
Carrousel

In glittering, bent, and twisted letters.

Your betters have clattered over Vienna
before,

Officer of his Imperial Majesty our
Father-in-Law!

Tink! Tink!

A workman's chisel can strew you to the
winds,

Munich.

Do they think

To pleasure Paris, used to the fall of
cities,

By giving her a fall of letters!

It is a month too late.

One month, and our lily-white Bourbon
king

Has done a colossal thing;

He has curdled love,

And soured the desires of a people.

Still the letters fall,

The workmen creep up and down their
ladders like lizards on a wall.

Tap! Tap! Tink!

Clink! Clink!

"Oh, merciful God, they will not touch
Austerlitz!

Strike me blind, my God, my eyes can
never look on that.

I would give the other leg to save it, it
took one.

Curse them! Curse them! Aim at his
hat.

Give me the stone. Why didn't you give
it to me?

I would not have missed. Curse him!

Curse all of them! They have got the
'A'!"

Ding! Ding!

"I saw the Terror, but I never saw so
horrible a thing as this.

Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!"

"Don't strike him, Fritz.

The mob will rise if you do.

Just run him out to the *quai*,
That will get him out of the way.

They are almost through."

Clink! Tink! Ding!

Clear as the sudden ring

Of a bell

"Z" strikes the pavement.

Farewell, Austerlitz, Tilsit, Presbourg;

Farewell, greatness departed.

Farewell, Imperial honours, knocked
broadcast by the beating hammers of
ignorant workmen.

Straight, in the Spring moonlight,

Rises the deflowered arch.

In the silence, shining bright,

She stands naked and unsubdued.

Her marble coldness will endure the
march

Of decades.

Rend her bronzes, hammers;

Cast down her inscriptions.

She is unconquerable, austere,

Cold as the moon that swims above her
When the nights are clear.

IV

CROISSY, ILE-DE-FRANCE, JUNE, 1815

"Whoa! Victorine.

Devil take the mare! I've never seen so
vicious a beast.

She kicked Jules the last time she was
here,

He's been lame ever since, poor chap."

Rap! Tap!

Tap-a-tap-a-tap! Tap! Tap!

"I'd rather be lame than dead at Water-
loo, M'sieu Charles."

"*Sacré Bleu!* Don't mention Waterloo,
and the damned grinning British.

We didn't run in the old days.

There wasn't any running at Jena.

Those were decent days,

And decent men, who stood up and
fought.

We never got beaten, because we
wouldn't be.

See!"

"You would have taught them, wouldn't
you, Sergeant Boignet?

But to-day it's everyone for himself,

And the Emperor isn't what he was."

"How the Devil do you know that?

If he was beaten, the cause

Is the green geese in his army, led by traitors.
 Oh, I say no names, Monsieur Charles,
 You needn't hammer so loud.
 If there are any spics lurking behind the bellows,
 I beg they come out. Dirty fellows!"

The old Sergeant seizes a red-hot poker
 And advances, brandishing it, into the shadows.
 The rows of horses flick
 Placid tails.
 Victorine gives a savage kick
 As the nails
 Go in. Tap! Tap!
 Jules draws a horseshoe from the fire
 And beats it from red to peacock-blue
 and black,
 Purpling darker at each whack.
 Ding! Dang! Dong!
 Ding-a-ding-dong!
 It is a long time since any one spoke.
 Then the blacksmith brushes his hand
 over his eyes,
 "Well," he sighs,
 "He's broke."
 The Sergeant charges out from behind
 the bellows.
 "It's the green geese, I tell you,
 Their hearts are all whites and yellows,
 There's no red in them. Red!
 That's what we want. Fouché should be fed
 To the guillotine, and all Paris dance the
carmagnole.
 That would breed jolly fine lick-bloods
 To lead his armies to victory."
 "Ancient history, Sergeant.
 He's done."
 "Say that again, Monsieur Charles, and
 I'll stun
 You where you stand for a dung-eating
 Royalist."
 The Sergeant gives the poker a savage
 twist;
 He is as purple as the cooling horseshoes.
 The air from the bellows creaks through
 the flues.
 Tap! Tap! The blacksmith shoes Victorine,
 And through the doorway a fine sheen
 Of leaves flutters, with the sun between.
 By a spurt of fire from the forge
 You can see the Sergeant, with swollen
 gorge,
 Puffing, and gurgling, and choking;

The bellows keep on croaking.
 They wheeze,
 And sneeze,
 Creak! Bang! Squeezel
 And the hammer strokes fall like buzzing
 bees
 Or pattering rain,
 Or faster than these,
 Like the hum of a waterfall struck by a
 breeze.
 Clank! from the bellow's chain pulled up
 and down.
 Clank!
 And sunshine twinkles on Victorine's
 flank,
 Starting it to blue,
 Dropping it to black.
 Clack! Clack!
 Tap-a-tap! Tap!
 Lord! What galloping! Some mishap
 Is making that man ride so furiously.
 "François, you!
 Victorine won't be through
 For another quarter of an hour." "As
 you hope to die,
 Work faster, man, the order has come."
 "What order? Speak out. Are you
 dumb?"
 "A chaise, without arms on the panels,
 at the gate
 In the far side-wall, and just to wait.
 We must be there in half an hour with
 swift cattle.
 You're a stupid fool if you don't hear that
 rattle.
 Those are German guns. Can't you guess
 the rest?
 Nantes, Rochefort, possibly Brest."
 Tap! Tap! as though the hammers were
 mad.
 Dang! Ding! Creak! The farrier's lad
 Jerks the bellows till he cracks their bones,
 And the stifled air hiccoughs and groans.
 The Sergeant is lying on the floor
 Stone dead, and his hat with the *tricolore*
 Cockade has rolled off into the cinders.
 Victorine snorts and lays back her ears.
 What glistens on the anvil? Sweat or
 tears?

V

ST. HELENA, MAY, 1821

Tap! Tap! Tap!
 Through the white tropic night.

Tap! Tap!
 Beat the hammers,
 Unwearied, indefatigable.
 They are hanging dull black cloth about
 the dead.
 Lustreless black cloth
 Which chokes the radiance of the moon-
 light
 And puts out the little moving shadows
 of leaves.
 Tap! Tap!
 The knocking makes the candles quaver,
 And the long black hangings waver
 Tap! Tap! Tap!
 Tap! Tap!
 In the ears which do not heed.
 Tap! Tap!
 Above the eyelids which do not flicker.
 Tap! Tap!
 Over the hands which do not stir.
 Chiselled like a cameo of white agate
 against the hangings,
 Struck to brilliance by the falling moon-
 light,
 A face!
 Sharp as a frozen flame,
 Beautiful as an altar lamp of silver,
 And still. Perfectly still.
 In the next room, the men chatter
 As they eat their midnight lunches.
 A knife hits against a platter.
 But the figure on the bed
 Between the stifling black hangings
 Is cold and motionless,
 Played over by the moonlight from the
 windows
 And the indistinct shadows of leaves.

Tap! Tap!
 Upholsterer Darling has a fine shop in
 Jamestown.
 Tap! Tap!
 Andrew Darling has ridden hard from
 Longwood to see to the work in his
 shop in Jamestown.
 He has a corps of men in it, toiling and
 swearing,
 Knocking, and measuring, and planing,
 and squaring,
 Working from a chart with figures,
 Comparing with their rules,
 Setting this and that part together with
 their tools.
 Tap! Tap! Tap!
 Haste indeed!

So great is the need
 That carpenters have been taken from
 the new church,
 Joiners have been called from shaping
 pews and lecterns
 To work of greater urgency.
 Coffins!
 Coffins is what they are making this
 bright Summer morning.
 Coffins — and all to measurement.
 There is a tin coffin,
 A deal coffin,
 A lead coffin,
 And Captain Bennett's best mahogany
 dining-table
 Has been sawed up for the grand outer
 coffin.
 Tap! Tap! Tap!
 Sunshine outside in the square,
 But inside, only hollow coffins and the
 tapping upon them.
 The men whistle,
 And the coffins grow under their hammers
 In the darkness of the shop.
 Tap! Tap! Tap!

Tramp of men.
 Steady tramp of men.
 Slit-eyed Chinese with long pigtails
 Bearing oblong things upon their
 shoulders
 March slowly along the road to Long-
 wood.
 Their feet fall softly in the dust of the
 road;
 Sometimes they call gutturally to each
 other and stop to shift shoulders.
 Four coffins for the little dead man,
 Four fine coffins,
 And one of them Captain Bennett's din-
 ing-table!
 And sixteen splendid Chinamen, all
 strong and able
 And of assured neutrality.
 Ah! George of England, Lord Bathurst
 & Co.
 Your princely munificence makes one's
 heart glow.
 Huzza! Huzza! For the Lion of England!

Tap! Tap! Tap!
 Marble likeness of an Emperor,
 Dead man, who burst your heart against
 a world too narrow,

The hammers drum you to your last throne
 Which always you shall hold alone
 Tap! Tap!
 The glory of your past is faded as a sunset fire,
 Your day lingers only like the tones of a wind lyre
 In a twilight room
 Here is the emptiness of your dream
 Scattered about you
 Coins of yesterday,
 Double napoleons stamped with Consul or Emperor,
 Strange as those of Herculaneum —
 And you just dead!
 Not one spool of thread
 Will these buy in any market place
 Lay them over him,
 They are the baubles of a crown of mist
 Worn in a vision and melted away at waking
 Tap! Tap!
 His heart strained at kingdoms
 And now it is content with a silver dish
 Strange World! Strange Wayfarer!
 Strange Destiny!
 Lower it gently beside him and let it lie
 Tap! Tap! Tap!

TWO TRAVELLERS IN THE PLACE VENDOME

REIGN OF LOUIS PHILIPPE

A great tall column spearing at the sky
 With a little man on top Goodness!
 Tell me why?
 He looks a silly thing enough to stand
 up there so high

What a strange fellow, like a soldier in
 a play,
 Tight fitting coat with the tails cut away,
 High crowned hat which the brims over-
 lay.

Two horned hat makes an outline like a
 bow
 Must have a sword, I can see the light
 glow
 Between a dark line and his leg Vertigo

I get gazing up at him, a pygmy flashed
 with sun
 A weathercock or scarecrow or both
 things in one?
 As bright as a jewelled crown hung above
 a throne

Say, what is the use of him if he doesn't
 turn?
 Just put up to glitter there, like a torch
 to burn,
 A sort of sacrificial show in a lofty urn?

But why a little soldier in an obsolete
 dress?
 I'd rather see a Goddess with a spear, I
 confess
 Something allegorical and fine Why,
 yes —

I cannot take my eyes from him I don't
 know why at all
 I've looked so long the whole thing
 swims I feel he ought to fall
 Foreshortened there among the clouds
 he's pitifully small

What do you say? There used to be an
 Emperor standing there,
 With flowing robes and laurel crown
 Really? Yet I declare
 Those spiral battles round the shaft don't
 seem just his affair.

A togaed, laurelled man's I mean Now
 this chap seems to feel
 As though he owned those soldiers
 Whew! How he makes one reel,
 Swinging round above his circling armies
 in a wheel

Sweeping round the sky in an orbit like
 the sun's,
 Flashing sparks like cannon balls from his
 own long guns
 Perhaps my sight is tired, but that figure
 simply stuns

How low the houses seem, and all the
 people are mere flies
 That fellow pokes his hat up till it
 scratches on the skies.
 Impudent! Audacious! But, by Jove, he
 blinds the eyes!

WAR PICTURES

THE ALLIES

August 14th, 1914

Into the brazen, burnished sky, the cry hurls itself. The zigzagging cry of hoarse throats, it floats against the hard winds, and binds the head of the serpent to its tail, the long snail-slow serpent of marching men. Men weighed down with rifles and knapsacks, and parching with war. The cry jars and splits against the brazen, burnished sky.

This is the war of wars, and the cause? Has this writhing worm of men a cause?

Crackling against the polished sky is an eagle with a sword. The eagle is red and its head is flame.

In the shoulder of the worm is a teacher.

His tongue laps the war-sucked air in drought, but he yells defiance at the red-eyed eagle, and in his ears are the bells of new philosophies, and their tinkling drowns the sputter of the burning sword. He shrieks, "God damn you! When you are broken, the word will strike out new shoots."

His boots are tight, the sun is hot, and he may be shot, but he is in the shoulder of the worm.

A dust speck in the worm's belly is a poet.

He laughs at the flaring eagle and makes a long nose with his fingers. He will fight for smooth, white sheets of paper, and uncurdled ink. The sputtering sword cannot make him blink, and his thoughts are wet and rippling. They cool his heart.

He will tear the eagle out of the sky and give the earth tranquillity, and loveliness printed on white paper.

The eye of the serpent is an owner of mills.

He looks at the glaring sword which has snapped his machinery and struck away his men.

But it will all come again, when the

sword is broken to a million dying stars, and there are no more wars.

Bankers, butchers, shop-keepers, painters, farmers — men, sway and sweat. They will fight for the earth, for the increase of the slow, sure roots of peace, for the release of hidden forces. They jibe at the eagle and his scorching sword.

One! Two! — One! Two! — clump the heavy boots. The cry hurtles against the sky.

Each man pulls his belt a little tighter, and shifts his gun to make it lighter. Each man thinks of a woman, and slaps out a curse at the eagle. The sword jumps in the hot sky, and the worm crawls on to the battle, stubbornly.

This is the war of wars, from eye to tail the serpent has one cause:

PEACE!

THE BOMBARDMENT

Slowly, without force, the rain drops into the city. It stops a moment on the carved head of Saint John, then slides on again, slipping and trickling over his stone cloak. It splashes from the lead conduit of a gargoyle, and falls from it in turmoil on the stones in the Cathedral square. Where are the people, and why does the fretted steeple sweep about in the sky? Boom! The sound swings against the rain. Boom, again! After it, only water rushing in the gutters, and the turmoil from the spout of the gargoyle. Silence. Ripples and mutters. Boom!

The room is damp, but warm. Little flashes swarm about from the firelight. The lustres of the chandelier are bright, and clusters of rubies leap in the bohemian glasses on the *étagère*. Her hands are restless, but the white masses of her hair are quite still. Boom! Will it never cease to torture, this iteration! Boom! The vibration shatters a glass on the *étagère*. It lies there, formless and glowing, with all its crimson gleams shot out of pattern, spilled, flowing red, blood-

red. A thin bell-note pricks through the silence. A door creaks. The old lady speaks: "Victor, clear away that broken glass." "Alas! Madame, the bohemian glass!" "Yes, Victor, one hundred years ago my father brought it—" Boom! The room shakes, the servitor quakes. Another goblet shivers and breaks. Boom!

It rustles at the window-pane, the smooth, streaming rain, and he is shut within its clash and murmur. Inside is his candle, his table, his ink, his pen, and his dreams. He is thinking, and the walls are pierced with beams of sunshine, slipping through young green. A fountain tosses itself up at the blue sky, and through the spattered water in the basin he can see copper carp, lazily floating among cold leaves. A wind-harp in a cedar-tree grieves and whispers, and words blow into his brain, bubbled, iridescent, shooting up like flowers of fire, higher and higher. Boom! The flame-flowers snap on their slender stems. The fountain rears up in long broken spears of dishevelled water and flattens into the earth. Boom! And there is only the room, the table, the candle, and the sliding rain. Again, Boom! — Boom! — Boom! He stuffs his fingers into his ears. He sees corpses, and cries out in fright. Boom! It is night, and they are shell-ing the city! Boom! Boom!

A child wakes and is afraid, and weeps in the darkness. What has made the bed shake? "Mother, where are you? I am awake." "Hush, my Darling, I am here." "But, Mother, something so queer happened, the room shook." Boom! "Oh! What is it? What is the matter?" Boom! "Where is Father? I am so afraid." Boom! The child sobs and shrieks. The house trembles and creaks. Boom!

Retorts, globes, tubes, and phials lie shattered. All his trials oozing across the floor. The life that was his choosing, lonely, urgent, goaded by a hope, all gone. A weary man in a ruined laboratory, that is his story. Boom! Gloom and ignorance, and the jig of drunken brutes. Diseases like snakes crawling over the earth, leaving trails of slime. Wails from people

burying their dead. Through the window, he can see the rocking steeple. A ball of fire falls on the lead of the roof, and the sky tears apart on a spike of flame. Up the spire, behind the lacings of stone, zigzagging in and out of the carved tracings, squirms the fire. It spouts like yellow wheat from the gargoyles, coils round the head of Saint John, and aureoles him in light. It leaps into the night and hisses against the rain. The Cathedral is a burning stain on the white, wet night.

Boom! The Cathedral is a torch, and the houses next to it begin to scorch. Boom! The bohemian glass on the *étagère* is no longer there. Boom! A stalk of flame sways against the red damask curtains. The old lady cannot walk. She watches the creeping stalk and counts. Boom! — Boom! — Boom!

The poet rushes into the street, and the rain wraps him in a sheet of silver. But it is threaded with gold and powdered with scarlet beads. The city burns. Quivering, spearing, thrusting, lapping, streaming, run the flames. Over roofs, and walls, and shops, and stalls. Smearing its gold on the sky, the fire dances, lances itself through the doors, and lisps and chuckles along the floors.

The child wakes again and screams at the yellow petalled flower flickering at the window. The little red lips of flame creep along the ceiling beams.

The old man sits among his broken experiments and looks at the burning Cathedral. Now the streets are swarming with people. They seek shelter and crowd into the cellars. They shout and call, and over all, slowly and without force, the rain drops into the city. Boom! And the steeple crashes down among the people. Boom! Boom, again! The water rushes along the gutters. The fire roars and mutters. Boom!

LEAD SOLDIERS

The nursery fire burns brightly, crackling in cheerful little explosions and trails

of sparks up the back of the chimney
 Minature rockets peppering the black
 bricks with golden stars, as though a gala
 flamed a night of victorious wars

The nodding mandarin on the book
 case moves his head forward and back,
 slowly, and looks into the air with his
 blue green eyes. He stares into the air
 and nods — forward and back. The red
 rose in his hand is a crimson splash on
 his yellow coat. Forward and back, and
 his blue green eyes stare into the air,
 and he nods — nods

Tommy's soldiers march to battle,
 Trumpets flare and snare drums
 rattle

Bayonets flash, and sabres glance —
 How the horses snort and prance!
 Cannon drawn up in a line
 Glitter in the dizzy shine
 Of the morning sunlight. Flags
 Ripple colours in great jags
 Red blows out, then blue, then green,
 Then all three — a weaving sheen
 Of prised patriotism. March
 Tommy's soldiers, stiff and starch,
 Boldly stepping to the rattle
 Of the drums, they go to battle

Tommy lies on his stomach on the
 floor and directs his columns. He puts
 his infantry in front, and before them
 ambles a mounted band. Their instru-
 ments make a strand of gold before the
 scarlet tunicked soldiers, and they take
 very long steps on their little green plat-
 forms, and from the ranks bursts the song
 of Tommy's soldiers marching to battle.
 The song jolts a little as the green plat-
 forms stick on the thick carpet. Tommy
 wheels his guns round the edge of a box
 of blocks, and places a squad of cavalry
 on the commanding eminence of a foot
 stool.

The fire snaps pleasantly, and the old
 Chinaman nods — nods. The fire makes
 the red rose in his hand glow and twist.
 Hush! That is a bold song Tommy's
 soldiers sing as they march along to
 battle.

Crack! Rattle! The sparks fly up the
 chimney

Tommy's army's off to war —
 Not a soldier knows what for
 But he knows about his rifle,
 How to shoot it, and a trifle
 Of the proper thing to do
 When it's he who is shot through.
 Like a cleverly trained flea,
 He can follow instantly
 Orders, and some quick commands
 Really make severe demands
 On a mind that's none too rapid,
 Leaden brains tend to the rapid
 But how beautifully dressed
 Is this army! How impressed
 Tommy is when at his heel
 All his baggage wagons wheel
 About the patterned carpet, and
 Moving up his heavy guns
 He sees them glow with diamond
 suns
 Flashing all along each barrel
 And the gold and blue apparel
 Of his gunners is a joy
 Tommy is a lucky boy
 Boom! Boom! Ta ra!

The old mandarin nods under his
 purple umbrella. The rose in his hand
 shoots its petals up in thin quills of
 crimson. Then they collapse and shrivel
 like red embers. The fire sizzles.

Tommy is galloping his cavalry, two
 by two, over the floor. They must pass
 the open terror of the door and gain the
 enemy encamped under the wash stand.
 The mounted band is very grand, playing
 allegro and leading the infantry on at the
 double quick. The tassel of the hearth
 rug has flung down the bass drum, and he
 and his dapple grey horse he overtripped,
 slipped out of line, with the little lead
 drumsticks glistening to the fire's shine.

The fire burns and crackles, and tickles
 the tripped bass drum with its sparkles.

The marching army hitches its little
 green platforms valiantly, and steadily
 approaches the door. The overturned
 bass drummer, lying on the hearth rug,
 melting in the heat, softens and sheds
 tears. The song jeers at his impotence,
 and flaunts the glory of the martial and
 still upstanding, vaunting the deeds it
 will do. For are not Tommy's soldiers
 all bright and new?

Tommy's leaden soldiers we,
 Glittering with efficiency.
 Not a button's out of place,
 Tons and tons of golden lace
 Wind about our officers
 Every manly bosom stirs
 At the thought of killing — killing!
 Tommy's dearest wish fulfilling
 We are gaudy, savage, strong,
 And our loins so ripe we long
 First to kill, then procreate,
 Doubling so the laws of Fate
 On their women we have sworn
 To graft our sons And overcome
 They'll rear us younger soldiers, so
 Shall our race endure and grow,
 Waving greater in the wombs
 Borrowed of them, while damp
 tombs
 Rot their men O Glorious War!
 Goad us with your points, Great
 Star!

The china mandarin on the bookcase
 nods slowly, forward and back — forward
 and back — and the red rose waxes and
 wriggles, thrusting its flaming petals un-
 der and over one another like tortured
 snakes

The fire strokes them with its dartles,
 and purrs at them, and the old man nods

Tommy does not hear the song He
 only sees the beautiful, new, gaily col-
 oured lead soldiers They belong to him,
 and he is very proud and happy He
 shouts his orders aloud, and gallops his
 cavalry past the door to the wash stand
 He creeps over the floor on his hands and
 knees to one battalion and another, but
 he sees only the bright colours of his
 soldiers and the beautiful precision of
 their gestures He is a lucky boy to
 have such fine lead soldiers to enjoy.

Tommy catches his toe in the leg of
 the wash stand, and jars the pitcher He
 snatches at it with his hands, but it is
 too late The pitcher falls, and as it
 goes, he sees the white water flow over
 its lip It slips between his fingers and
 crashes to the floor But it is not water
 which oozes to the door The stain is
 glutinous and dark, a spark from the fire-
 light heads it to red. In and out, be-

tween the fine, new soldiers, licking over
 the carpet, squirms the stream of blood
 lapping at the little green platforms, and
 flapping itself against the painted uni-
 forms.

The nodding mandarin moves his head
 slowly, forward and back The rose is
 broken, and where it fell is black blood
 The old mandarin leers under his purple
 umbrella, and nods — forward and back,
 staring into the air with blue green eyes
 Every time his head comes forward a
 rosebud pushes between his lips, rushes
 into full bloom, and drips to the ground
 with a splashing sound The pool of
 black blood grows and grows, with each
 dropped rose, and spreads out to join the
 stream from the wash stand The beau-
 tiful army of lead soldiers steps boldly for-
 ward, but the little green platforms are
 covered in the rising streams of blood

The nursery fire burns brightly and
 flings fan bursts of stars up the chimney,
 as though a gala flamed a night of vic-
 torious wars

THE PAINTER ON SILK

There was a man
 Who made his living
 By painting roses
 Upon silk.

He sat in an upper chamber
 And painted,
 And the noises of the street
 Meant nothing to him.

When he heard bugles, and fifes, and
 drums,
 He thought of red, and yellow, and white
 roses
 Bursting in the sunshine,
 And smiled as he worked.

He thought only of roses,
 And silk
 When he could get no more silk
 He stopped painting
 And only thought
 Of roses.

The day the conquerors
 Entered the city,

The old man
Lay dying
He heard the bugles and drums,
And wished he could paint the roses
Bursting into sound.

A BALLAD OF FOOTMEN

Now what in the name of the sun and
the stars
Is the meaning of this most unholy of
wars?

Do men find life so full of humour and
joy
That for want of excitement they smash
up the toy?

Fifteen millions of soldiers with popguns
and horses
All bent upon killing, because their "of
courses"

Are not quite the same All these men
by the cars,
And nine nations of women choking with
tears,

It is folly to think that the will of a king
Can force men to make ducks and drakes
of a thing

They value, and life is, at least one sup-
poses,
Of some little interest, even if roses

Have not grown up between one foot
and the other
What a marvel bureaucracy is, which can
smother —

Such quite elementary feelings, and tag
A man with a number, and set him to wag
His legs and his arms at the word of com-
mand
Or the blow of a whistle! He's certainly
damned,

Fit only for mince-meat, if a little gold
lace
And an upturned moustache can set him
to tace

Bullets, and bayonets, and death, and
diseases,
Because some one he calls his Emperor,
pleases.

If each man were to lay down his weapon,
and say,
With a click of his heels, "I wish you
Good-day,"

Now what, may I ask, could the Emperor
do?

A king and his minions are really so few.

Angry? Oh, of course, a most funous
Emperor!

But the men are so many they need not
mind his temper, or

The dire results which could not be in-
flicted

With no one to execute sentence, convicted

Is just the weak wind from an old, broken
bellows

What lackeys men are, who might be
such fine fellows!

To be killing each other, unmercifully,
At an order, as though one said, "Bring
up the ten."

Or is it that tasting the blood on their jaws
They lap at it, drunk with its ferment,
and laws

So patiently builded, are nothing to
drinking
More blood, any blood. They don't no-
tice its stinking

I don't suppose tigers do, fighting cocks,
sparrows,
And, as to men — what are men, when
their marrows

Are running with blood they have gulped,
it is plain

Such excellent sport does not recollect
pain

Toll the bells in the steeples left stand-
ing. Half-mast

The flags which meant order, for order
is past

Take the dust of the streets and sprinkle
your head,

The civilization we've worked for is dead.

Squeeze into this archway, the head of
the line

Has just swung round the corner to *Die
Wacht am Rhein.*

THE OVERGROWN PASTURE

REAPING

You want to know what's the matter
with me, do yer?

My! Ain't men blinder'n moles?
It ain't nothin' new, be sure o' that.
Why, ef you'd had eyes you'd ha' seed
Me changin' under your very nose,
Each day a little diff'rent.
But you never see nothin', you don't.
Don't touch me, Jake,
Don't you dars't to touch me,
I ain't in no humour.
That's what's come over me;
Jest a change clear through.
You lay still, an' I'll tell yer,
I've had it on my mind to tell yer
f'er some time.

It's a strain livin' a lie from mornin' till
night,

An' I'm goin' to put an end to it right
now.

An' don't make any mistake about one
thing,

When I married yer I loved yer.

Why, your voice 'ud make
Me go hot and cold all over,
An' your kisses most stopped my heart
from beatin'.

Lord! I was a silly fool.

But that's the way 'twas.

Well, I married yer

An' thought Heav'n was comin'

To set on the door-step.

Heav'n didn't do no settin',

Though the first year warn't so bad.

The baby's fever threw you off some, I
guess,

An' then I took her death real hard,

An' a mopey wife kind o' disgusts a man.

I ain't blamin' yer exactly.

But that's how 'twas.

Do lay quiet,

I know I'm slow, but it's harder to say'n
I thought.

There come a time when I got to be
More wife agin' than mother.

The mother part was sort of a waste

When we didn't have no other child.

But you'd got used ter lots o' things,

An' you was all took up with the farm.

Many's the time I've laid awake
Watchin' the moon go clear through the
elm-tree,

Out o' sight.

I'd foller yer around like a dog,
An' set in the chair you'd be'n settin' in,
Jest to feel its arms around me,
So long's I didn't have yours.

It preyed on me, I guess,

Longin' and longin'

While you was busy all day, and snorin'
all night.

Yes, I know you're wide awake now,

But now ain't then,

An' I guess you'll think diff'rent

When I'm done.

Do you mind the day you went to Had-
rock?

I didn't want to stay home for reasons,
But you said someone'd have to be here
'Cause Elmer was comin' to see t' th'
telephone.

An' you never see why I was so set on
goin' with yer,

Our married life hadn't be'n any great
shakes,

Still marriage is marriage, an' I was raised
God-fearin'.

But, Lord, you didn't notice nothin',

An' Elmer hangin' around all Winter!

'Twas a lovely mornin'.

The apple-trees was just elegant

With their blossoms all flared out,

An' there warn't a cloud in the sky.

You went, you wouldn't pay no 'tention
to what I said,

An' I heard the Ford chuggin' for most
a mile,

The air was so still.

Then Elmer come.

It's no use your frettin', Jake,

I'll tell you all about it.

I know what I'm doin',

An' what's worse, I know what I done.

Elmer fixed th' telephone in about two
minits,

An' he didn't seem in no hurry to go,

An' I don't know as I wanted him to go
either,

I was awful mad at your not takin' me
with yer,

An' I was tired o' wishin' and wishin'
An' gittin' no comfort.
I guess it ain't necessary to tell yer all
the things.

He stayed to dinner,
An' he helped me do the dishes,
An' he said a home was a fine thing,
An' I said dishes warn't a home
Nor yet the room they're in.
He said a lot o' things,
An' I fended him off at first,
But he got talkin' all around me,
Clost up to the things I'd be'n thinkin',
What's the use o' me goin' on, Jake,
You know.

He got all he wanted,
An' I give it to him,
An' what's more, I'm glad!
I ain't dead, anyway,
An' somebody thinks I'm somethin'.
Keep away, Jake,
You can kill me to-morrer if you want to,
But I'm goin' to have my say.
Funny thing! Guess I ain't made to hold
a man.

Elmer ain't be'n here for more'n two
months.

I don't want to pretend nothin',
Mebbe if he'd be'n lately
I shouldn't have told yer.
I'll go away in the mornin', o' course.
What you want the light fer?
I don't look no diff'rent.
Ain't the moon bright enough
To look at a woman that's deceived yer
by?

Don't, Jake, don't, you can't love me now!
It ain't a question of forgiveness.
Why! I'd be thinkin' o' Elmer ev'ry
minute;

It ain't decent.

Oh, my God! It ain't decent any more
either way!

OFF THE TURNPIKE

Good ev'nin', Mis' Priest.
I jest stepped in to tell you Good-bye.
Yes, it's all over.
All my things is packed
An' every last one o' them boxes
Is on Bradley's team
Bein' hauled over to th' depot.
No, I ain't goin' back agin.
I'm stoppin' over to French's fer to-night,

And goin' down first train in th' mornin'.
Yes, it do seem kinder queer
Not to be goin' to see Cherry's Orchard
no more,

But Land Sakes! When a change's
comin',

Why, I al'ays say it can't come too quick.

Now, that's real kind o' you,

Your doughnuts is always so tasty.

Yes, I'm goin' to Chicago,

To my niece,

She's married to a fine man, hardware
business,

An' doin' real well, she tells me.

Lizzie's be'n at me to go out ther for the
longest while.

She ain't got no kith nor kin to Chicago,
you know

She's rented me a real nice little flat,

Same house as hers,

An' I'm goin' to try that city livin' folks
say's so pleasant.

Oh, yes, he was real generous,

Paid me a sight o' money fer the Orchard;

I told him 'twouldn't yield nothin' but
stones,

But he ain't farmin' it.

Lor', no, Mis' Priest,

He's jest took it to set and look at the
view.

Mebbe he wouldn't be so stuck on the
view

Ef he'd seed it every mornin' and night
for forty year

Same's as I have.

I dessay it's pretty enough,

But it's so pressed into me

I c'n see't with my eyes shut.

No, I ain't cold, Mis' Priest,

Don't shut th' door.

I'll be all right in a minit.

But I ain't a mite sorry to leave that view.

Well, mebbe 'tis queer to feel so,

An' mebbe 'taint.

My! But that tea's revivin'.

Old things ain't always pleasant things,
Mis' Priest.

No, no, I don't call late on comin' back,

That's why I'd rather be to Chicago,

Boston's too near.

It ain't cold, Mis' Priest,

It's jest my thoughts.

I ain't sick, only—

Mis' Priest, ef you've nothin' ter take yer
time,

An' have a mind to listen,
 There's somethin' I'd like ter speak about.
 I ain't never mentioned it,
 But I'd like to tell yer 'fore I go.
 Would you mind lowerin' them shades,
 Fall twilight's awful grey,
 An' that fire's real cosy with the shades
 drawn.
 Well, I guess folks about here think I've
 be'n dret'ful unsociable.
 You needn't say 'taint so, 'cause I know
 diff'rent.
 An' what's more, it's true.
 Well, the reason is I've be'n scared out
 o' my life.
 Scared ev'ry minit o' th' time, fer eight
 year.
 Eight mortal year 'tis, come next June.
 'Twas on the eighteenth o' June,
 Six months after I'd buried my hus-
 band,
 That somethin' happened ter me.
 Mebbe you'll mind that afore that
 I was a cheery body.
 Hiram was too,
 Al'ays liked to ask a neighbor in,
 An' ev'n when he died,
 Barrin' low sperirts, I warn't averse to
 seein' nobody.
 But that eighteenth o' June changed
 ev'rythin'.

I was doin' most o' th' farmwork myself,
 With jest a hired boy, Clarence King,
 'twas,
 Comin' in fer an hour or two.
 Well, that eighteenth o' June
 I was goin' round,
 Lockin' up and sccin' to things 'fore I
 went to bed.
 I was jest steppin' out t' th' barn,
 Goin' round outside 'stead o' through
 the shed,
 'Cause there was such a sight o' moon-
 light
 Somehow or another I thought 'twould
 be pretty outdoors.
 I got settled fer pretty things that night,
 I guess.
 I ain't stuck on 'em no more.
 Well, them laylock bushes side o' th'
 house
 Was real lovely.
 Glitt'rin' and shakin' in the moonlight,
 An' the smell o' them rose right up
 An' most took my breath away.

The colour o' the spikes was all faded
 out,
 They never keep their colour when the
 moon's on 'em,
 But the smell fair 'toxicated me.
 I was al'ays partial to a sweet scent,
 An' I went close up t' th' bushes
 So's to put my face right into a flower.
 Mis' Priest, jest's I got breathin' in that
 laylock bloom
 I saw, layin' right at my feet,
 A man's hand!
 It was as white's the side o' th' house,
 And sparklin' like that hun'nous paint
 they put on gate-posts.
 I screamed right out,
 I couldn't help it,
 An' I could hear my scream
 Goin' over an' over
 In that echo be'ind th' barn.
 Hearin' it agin an' agin like that
 Scared me so, I dar'sn't scream any
 more.
 I jest stood ther,
 And looked at that hand.
 I thought the echo'd begin to hammet
 like my heart,
 But it didn't.
 There was only th' wind,
 Sighin' through the laylock leaves,
 An' slappin' 'em up agin the house.
 Well, I guess I looked at that hand
 Most ten minits,
 An' it never moved,
 Jest lay there white as white.
 After a while I got to thinkin' that o'
 course
 'Twas some drunken tramp over from
 Redfield.
 That calmed me some,
 An' I commenced to think I'd better git
 him out
 From under them laylocks.
 I planned to drag him in t' th' barn
 An' lock him in ther till Clarence come
 in th' mornin'.

I got so mad thinkin' o' that all-fired
 brazen tramp
 Asleep in my laylocks,
 I jest stooped down and grabbed th'
 hand and give it an awful pull.
 Then I bumped right down settin' on
 the ground.
 Mis' Priest, ther warn't no body come
 with the hand.

No, it ain't cold, it's jest I can't abear
thinkin' of it,

Ev'n now.

I'll take a sip o' tea.

Thank you, Mis' Priest, that's better.

I'd ruther finish now I've begun.

Thank you, jest the same.

I dropped the hand's ef it'd be'n red hot

'Stead o' ice cold.

Fer a minit or two I jest laid on that
grass

Pantin'.

Then I up and run to them laylocks

An' pulled 'em every which way.

True es I'm settin' here, Mis' Priest,

Ther warn't nothin' ther.

I peeked an' pryed all about 'em,

But ther warn't no man ther

Neither livin' nor dead.

But the hand was ther all right,

Upside down, the way I'd dropped it,

And glist'nin' fit to dazzle yer.

I don't know how I done it,

An' I don't know why I done it,

But I wanted to git that dret'ful hand
out o' sight

I got in t' th' barn, somehow,

An' felt roun' till I got a spade.

I couldn't stop fer a lantern,

Besides, the moonlight was bright enough
in all conscience.

Then I scooped that awful thing up in
th' spade.

I had a sight o' trouble doin' it.

It slid off, and tipped over, and I
couldn't bear

Ev'n to touch it with my foot to prop it,
But I done it somehow.

Then I carried it off be'ind the barn,
Clost to an old apple-tree

Where you couldn't see from the house,

An' I buried it,

Good an' deep.

I don't rec'lect nothin' more o' that
night.

Clarence woke me up in th' mornin',
Hollerin' fer me to come down and set
th' milk.

When he'd gone,

I stole roun' to the apple-tree

And seed the earth all new turned

Where I left it in my hurry.

I did a heap o' gardenin'

That mornin'.

I couldn't cut no big sods

Fear Clarence would notice and ask me
what I wanted 'em fer,

So I got teeny bits o' turf here and ther,
And no onc couldn't tell ther'd be'n any
diggin'

When I got through.

They was awful days after that, Mis'
Priest,

I used ter go every mornin' and poke
about them bushes,

An' up and down the fence,

Ter find the body that hand come off of.
But I couldn't never find nothin'.

I'd lay awake nights

Hearin' them laylocks blowin' and
whiskin'.

At last I had Clarence cut 'em down

An' make a big bonfire of 'em.

I told him the smell made me sick,

An' that warn't no lie,

I can't abear the smell on 'em now.

An' no wonder, es you say.

I fretted somethin' awful 'bout that hand

I wondered, could it be Hiram's,

But folks don't rob graveyards hereabouts.

Besides, Hiram's hands warn't that awful,
starin' white.

I give up seein' people,

I was afeared I'd say somethin'.

You know what folks thought o' me

Better'n I do, I dessay,

But mebbe now you'll see I couldn't do
nothin' diff'rent.

But I stuck it out,

I warn't goin' to be downed

By no loose hand, no matter how it come
ther

But that ain't the worst, Mis' Priest,

Not by a long ways.

Two year ago, Mr. Densmore made me
an offer for Cherry's Orchard.

Well, I'd got used to th' thought o'
bein' sort o' blighted,

An' I warn't scared no more.

Lived down my fear, I guess.

I'd kinder got used to the' thought o'
that awful night,

And I didn't mope much about it.

Only I never went out o' doors by moon-
light;

That stuck.

Well, when Mr. Densmore's offer come,
I started thinkin' 'bout the place

An' all the things that had gone on ther.

Thinks I, I guess I'll go and see where
 I put the hand.
 I was foolhardy with the long time that
 had gone by.
 I know'd the place real well,
 Fer I'd put it right in between two o'
 the apple roots.
 I don't know what possessed me, Mis'
 Priest,
 But I kinder wanted to know
 That the hand had been flesh and bone,
 anyway.
 It had sorter bothered me, thinkin' I
 might ha' imagined it.
 I took a mornin' when the sun was real
 pleasant and warm;
 I guessed I wouldn't jump for a few old
 bones.
 But I did jump, somethin' wicked.
 Ther warn't no bones!
 Ther warn't nothin'!
 Not ev'n the gold ring I'd minded bein'
 on the little finger.
 I don't know ef ther ever was anythin'.
 I've worried myself sick over it.
 I be'n diggin' and diggin' day in and
 day out
 Till Clarence ketched me at it.
 Oh, I know'd real well what you all
 thought,
 An' I ain't sayin' you're not right,
 But I ain't goin' to end in no county
 'sylum
 If I c'n help it.
 The shiv'rin' fits come on me sudden
 like.
 I know 'em, don't you trouble.
 I've fretted considerable about the 'sylum,
 I guess I be'n frettin' all the time I ain't
 be'n diggin'.
 But anyhow I can't dig to Chicago, can I?
 'Thank you, Mis' Priest,
 I'm better now. I only dropped in in
 passin'.
 I'll jest be steppin' along down to
 French's.
 No, I won't be seein' nobody in the
 mornin',
 It's a pretty early start.
 Don't you stand ther, Mis' Priest,
 The wind'll blow yer lamp out,
 An' I c'n see easy, I got ahold o' the
 gate now.
 I ain't a mite tired, thank you.
 Good-night.

THE GROCERY

"Hullo, Alice!"
 "Hullo, Leon!"
 "Say, Alice, gi' me a couple
 O' them two for five cigars,
 Will yer?"
 "Where's your nickel?"
 "Myl Ain't you close!
 Can't trust a feller, can yer."
 "Trust you. Why
 What you owe this store
 Would set you up in business.
 I can't think why Father 'lows it."
 "Yer Father's a sight more neighbourly
 Than you be. That's a fact.
 Besides, he knows I got a vote."
 "A vote! Oh, yes, you got a vote!
 A lot o' good the Senate'll be to Father
 When all his bank account
 Has run away in credits.
 There's your cigars,
 If you can relish smokin'
 With all you owe us standin'."
 "I dunno as that make 'em taste any
 diff'rent.
 You ain't fair to me, Alice, 'deed you
 ain't.
 I work when anythin's doin'.
 I'll get a carpenterin' job next Summer
 sure.
 Cleve was tellin' me to-day he'd take me
 on come Spring."
 "Come Spring, and this December!
 I've no patience with you, Leon,
 Shilly-shallyin' the way you do.
 Here, lift over them crates o' oranges
 I want'er fix 'em in the winder."
 "It riles yer, don't it, me not havin'
 work.
 You pepper up about it somethin' good.
 You pick an' pick, and that don't help
 a mite.
 Say, Alice, do come in out o' that winder.
 Th' oranges c'n wait,
 An' I don't like talkin' to yer back."
 "Don't you! Well, you'd better make
 the best o' what you can git.
 Maybe you won't have my back to talk
 to soon.
 They look good in pyramids with the
 'lectric light on 'em,
 Don't they?
 Now hand me the bananas
 An' I'll string 'em right acrost."

"What do yer mean
 'Bout me not havin' you to talk to?
 Arc yer springin' somethin' on me?"
 "I don't know 'bout springin'
 When I'm tellin' you right out.
 I'm goin' away, that's all."
 "Where? Why?
 What yer mean — goin' away?"
 "I've took a place
 Down to Boston, in a candy store
 For the holidays."
 "Good Land, Alice,
 What in the Heavens fer?"
 "To earn some money,
 And to git away from here, I guess."
 "Ain't yer Father got enough?
 Don't he give yer proper pocket-money?"
 "He'd have a plenty, if you folks paid
 him."
 "He's rich I tell yer.
 I never figured he'd be close with you."
 "Oh, he ain't. Not close.
 That ain't why.
 But I must git away from here.
 I must! I must!"
 "You got a lot o' reason in yer
 To-night.
 How long d' you cal'late
 You'll be gone?"
 "Maybe for always."
 "What ails yer, Alice?
 Talkin' wild like that.
 Ain't you an' me goin' to be married
 Some day."
 "Some day! Some day!
 I guess the sun'll never rise on some day."
 "So that's the trouble.
 Same old story.
 'Cause I ain't got the cash to settle right
 now.
 You know I love yer,
 An' I'll marry yer as soon
 As I c'n raise the money."
 "You've said that any time these five
 year,
 But you don't do nothin'."
 "Wot could I do?
 Ther ain't no work here Winters.
 Not fer a carpenter, ther ain't."
 "I guess you warn't born a carpenter.
 Ther's ice-cuttin' a plenty."
 "I got a dret'ful tender throat;
 Dr. Smiles he told me
 I mustn't resk ice-cuttin'."
 "Why haven't you gone to Boston,

And hunted up a job?"
 "Have yer forgot the time I went ex-
 pressin'
 In the American office, down ther?"
 "And come back two weeks later!
 No, I ain't."
 "You didn't want I should git hurted,
 Did yer?
 I'm a sight too light fer all that liftin'
 work.
 My back was commencin' to strain, as
 'twas.
 Ef I was like yer brother now,
 I'd ha' be'n down to the city long ago.
 But I'm too clumsy fer a dancer.
 I ain't got Arthur's luck."
 "Do you call it luck to be a disgrace to
 your folks,
 And git locked up in jail?"
 "Oh, come now, Alice,
 'Disgrace' is a mite strong.
 Why, the jail was a joke.
 Art's all right."
 "All right!
 All right to dance, and smirk, and lie
 For a livin',
 And then in the end
 Lead a silly girl to give you
 What warn't hers to give
 By pretendin' you'd marry her —
 And she a pupil."
 "He'd ha' married her right enough,
 Her folks was millionaires."
 "Yes, he'd ha' married her!
 Thank God, they saved her that."
 "Art's a fine feller.
 I wish I had his luck.
 Swellin' round in Hart, Schaffner & Marx
 fancy suits,
 And eatin' in rest'rants.
 But somebody's got to stick to the old
 place,
 Else Foxfield'd have to shut up shop,
 Hey, Alice?"
 "You admire him!
 You admire Arthur!
 You'd be like him only you can't dance.
 Oh, Shame! Shame!
 And I've been like that silly girl.
 Fooled with your promises,
 And I give you all I had.
 I knew it, oh, I knew it,
 But I wanted to git away 'fore I proved
 it,
 You've shamed me through and through.

Why couldn't you hold your tongue,
 And spared me seein' you
 As you really are."
 "What the Devil's the row?
 I only said Art was lucky.
 What are you spitfirin' at me fer?
 Forget it, Alice.
 We've had good times, ain't we?
 I'll see Cleve 'bout that job agin to-
 morrow,
 And we'll be married 'fore hayin' time."
 "It's like you to remind me o' hayin'
 time.
 I've good cause to love it, ain't I?
 Many's the night I've hid my face in the
 dark
 To shut out thinkin'!"
 "Why, that ain't nothin'."
 You ain't be'n half so kind to me
 As lots o' fellers' girls.
 Gi' me a kiss, Dear,
 And let's make up."
 "Make up!
 You poor fool.
 Do you suppose I care a ten cent piece
 For you now.
 You've killed yourself for me.
 Done it out o' your own mouth.
 You've took away my home,
 I hate the sight o' the place.
 You're all over it,
 Every stick an' stone means you,
 An' I hate 'em all."
 "Alice, I say,
 Don't go on like that.
 I can't marry yer
 Boardin' in one room,
 But I'll see Cleve to-morrow,
 I'll make him —"
 "Oh, you fool!
 You terrible fool!"
 "Alice, don't go yit,
 Wait a minit,
 I'll see Cleve —"
 "You terrible fool!"
 "Alice, don't go.
 Alice —" (Door slams)

NUMBER 3 ON THE DOCKET

The lawyer, are you?
 Well! I ain't got nothin' to say.
 Nothin'!
 I told the perlice I hadn't nothin'.
 They know'd real well 'twas me.

'Ther warn't no supposin',
 Ketchin' me in the woods as they did,
 An' me in my house dress.
 Folks don't walk miles an' miles
 In the drifted snow,
 With no hat nor wrap on 'em
 Ef everythin's all right, I guess.
 All right? Ha! Ha! Ha!
 Nothin' warn't right with me.
 Never was.
 Oh, Lord! Why did I do it?
 Why ain't it yesterday, and Ed here
 agin?
 Many's the time I've set up with him
 nights
 When he had cramps, or rheumatizm, or
 somethin'.
 I used ter nurse him same's ef he was a
 baby.
 I wouldn't hurt him, I love him!
 Don't you dare to say I killed him.
 "Twarn't me!
 Somethin' got ahold o' me. I couldn't
 help it.
 Oh, what shall I do! What shall I do!
 Yes, Sir.
 No, Sir.
 I beg your pardon, I — I —
 Oh, I'm a wicked woman!
 An' I'm desolate, desolate!
 Why warn't I struck dead or paralyzed
 Afore my hands done it.
 Oh, my God, what shall I do!
 No, Sir, ther ain't no extenuatin' cir-
 cumstances,
 An' I don't want none.
 I want a bolt o' lightnin'
 To strike me dead right now!
 Oh, I'll tell yer.
 But it won't make no diff'rence.
 Nothin' will.
 Yes, I killed him.
 Why do yer make me say it?
 It's cruel! Cruel!
 I killed him because o' th' silence.
 The long, long silence,
 That watched all around me,
 And he wouldn't break it.
 I tried to make him,
 Time an' agin,
 But he was terrible taciturn, Ed was.
 He never spoke 'cept when he had to,
 An then he'd only say "yes" and "no."
 You can't even guess what that silence
 was.

I'd hear it whusperin' in my ears,
 An' I got frightened, 'twas so thick,
 An' al'ays comin' back
 Ef Ed would ha' talked sometimes
 It would ha' driven it away,
 But he never would
 He didn't hear it same as I did
 You see, Sir,
 Our farm was off'n the main road,
 And set away back under the mountain,
 And the village was seven mile off,
 Meisurin' after you'd got out o' our lane
 We didn't have no hired man,
 'Cept in hayn' time,
 An' Dane's place,
 That was the nearest,
 Was clear way 'tother side the mountain
 They used Marley post office
 An' ours was Benton
 Ther was a cart track took yer to Dane's
 in Summer,
 An' it warn't above two miles that way,
 But it warn't never broke out Winters
 I used to dread the Winters
 Secm's ef I couldn't abear to see the
 golden rod bloomin',
 Winter'd come so quick after that
 You don't know what snow's like when
 yer with it
 Day in an' day out
 Ed would be out all day loggin',
 An' I set at home and look at the snow
 Layin' over everythin',
 It 'ud dazzle me blind,
 Till it warn't white any more, but black
 as ink
 Then the quiet 'ud commence rushin' past
 my ears
 Till I most went mad listenin' to it
 Many's the time I've dropped a pan on
 the floor
 Jest to hear it clatter.
 I was most frantic when dinner time come
 An' Ed was back from the woods
 I'd ha' give my soul to hear him speak
 But he'd never say a word till I asked him
 Did he like the raised biscuits or what-
 ever,
 An' then sometimes he'd jest nod his
 answer
 Then he'd go out agin,
 An' I'd watch him from the kitchen
 winder
 It seemed the woods come marchin' out
 to meet him

An' the trees 'ud press round him an'
 hustle him
 I got so I was scared o' th' trees.
 I thought they come nearer,
 Every day a little nearer,
 Closin' up round the house.
 I never went in t' th' woods Winters,
 Though in Summer I liked 'em well
 enough.
 It warn't so bad when my litle boy was
 with us
 He used to go sleddin' and skatin',
 An' every day his father fetched him to
 school in the pung
 An' brought him back agin.
 We scraped an' scraped fer Neddy,
 We wanted him to have a education.
 We sent him to High School,
 An' then he went up to Boston to Tech-
 nology.
 He was a mmun' engineer,
 An' doin' real well,
 A credit to his bringin' up
 But his very first position ther was an
 explosion in the mine.
 And I'm glad! I'm glad!
 He ain't here to see me now.
 Neddy! Neddy!
 I'm your mother still, Neddy.
 Don't turn from me like that
 I can't abear it. I can't! I can't!
 What did you say?
 Oh, yes, Sir.
 I'm here
 I'm very sorry,
 I don't know what I'm sayin'.
 No, Sir,
 Not till after Neddy died.
 'Twas the next Winter the silence come,
 I don't remember noticin' it afore.
 That was five year ago,
 An' it's been gittin' worse an' worse
 I asked Ed to put in a telephone
 I thought ef I felt the whusperin' comin'
 on
 I could ring up some o' th' folks
 But Ed wouldn't hear of it
 He said we'd paid so much for Neddy
 We couldn't hardly git along as 'twas
 An' he never understood me wantin' to
 talk
 Well, this year was worse'n all the others,
 We had a terrible spell o' stormy weather,
 An' the snow lay so thick
 You couldn't see the fences even

Out o' doors was as flat as the palm o'
 my hand,
 Ther warn't a hump or a holler
 Fer as you could see
 It was so quiet
 The snappin' o' the branches back in the
 wood lot
 Sounded like pistol shots
 I'd was out all day
 Same as usual
 An' it seem'd he talked less'n ever
 He didn't even say 'Good mornin',' once
 or twice,
 An' jst nodded or shook his head when
 I asked him things
 On Monday he said he'd got to go over
 to Benton
 I'er some oats
 I'd oughter ha' gone with him,
 But 'twas washin' day
 An' I was afear'd the fine weather'd
 break,
 An' I couldn't do my dryin'
 All my life I'd done my work punctual,
 An' I couldn't fix my conscience
 To go junketin' on a washin' day
 I can't tell you what that day was to me
 It dragg'd an' dragg'd,
 I'er ther warn't no Ed ter break it in the
 middle
 Fer dinner
 Every time I stopped stirrin' the water
 I heerd the whisperrin' all about me
 I stopped oftener'n I should
 To see ef 'twas still ther,
 An' it al'ays was
 An' gittin' louder
 It seem'd ter me
 Once I threw up the winder to feel the
 wind
 That seem'd most alive somehow
 But the woods looked so kind of men-
 acin'
 I closed it quick
 An' started to mangle's hard's I could,
 The squeekin' was comfortin'
 Well, Ed come home 'bout four
 I seen him down the road,

An' I run out through the shed inter
 th' barn
 To meet him quicker
 I hollered out, 'Hullo'
 But he didn't say nothin',
 He jst drove right in
 An' climbed out o' th' sleigh
 An' commenced unharnessin'
 I asked him a heap o' questions,
 Who he'd seed
 An' what he'd done
 Once in a while he'd nod or shake,
 But most o' th' time he didn't do nothin'
 "I was gittin' dark then,
 An' I was in a state,
 With the loneliness
 An' I'd payin' no attention
 Like somethin' warn't livin'.
 All of a sudden it come,
 I don't know what,
 But I jst couldn't stand no more
 It didn't seem's though that was Ed,
 An' it didn't seem as though I was me
 I had to break a way out somehow,
 Somethin' was closin' in
 An' I was stiflin'
 Ed's loggin' ave was ther,
 An' I took it
 Oh, my God!
 I can't see nothin' else afore me all the
 time
 I run out inter th' woods,
 Seem'd as ef they was pullin' me,
 An' all the time I was wadin' through the
 snow
 I seed Ed in front of me
 Where I'd laid him
 An' I see him now
 There! There!
 What you holdin' me fer?
 I want ter go to Ed,
 He's bleedin'.
 Stop holdin' me.
 I got to go
 I'm comin', Ed
 I'll be ther in a minit.
 Oh, I'm so tired!
 (Faints)

CLOCKS TICK A CENTURY

NIGHTMARE: A TALE FOR AN
AUTUMN EVENING

AFTER A PRINT BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

It was a gusty night,
 With the wind booming, and swooping,
 Looping round corners,
 Sliding over the cobble-stones,
 Whipping and veering,
 And careering over the roofs
 Like a thousand clattering horses.
 Mr. Spruggins had been dining in the
 city,
 Mr. Spruggins was none too steady in his
 gait,
 And the wind played ball with Mr.
 Spruggins
 And laughed as it whistled past him.
 It rolled him along the street,
 With his little feet pit-a-patting on the
 flags of the sidewalk,
 And his muffler and his coat-tails blown
 straight out behind him.
 It pumped him against area railings,
 And chuckled in his ear when he said
 "Ouch!"
 Sometimes it lifted him clear off his little
 patting feet
 And bore him in triumph over three grey
 flagstones and a quarter.
 The moon dodged in and out of clouds,
 winking.
 It was all very unpleasant for Mr.
 Spruggins,
 And when the wind flung him hard
 against his own front door
 It was a relief,
 Although the breath was quite knocked
 out of him.
 The gas-lamp in front of the house flared
 up,
 And the keyhole was as big as a barn
 door;
 The gas-lamp flickered away to a sputter-
 ing blue star,
 And the keyhole went out with it.
 Such a stabbing, and jabbing,
 And sticking, and picking,
 And poking, and pushing, and prying
 With that key;
 And there is no denying that Mr. Sprug-
 gins rapped out an oath or two,

Rub-a-dub-dubbing them out to a real
 snare-drum roll.
 But the door opened at last,
 And Mr. Spruggins blew through it into
 his own hall
 And slammed the door to so hard
 That the knocker banged five times be-
 fore it stopped.
 Mr. Spruggins struck a light and lit a
 candle,
 And all the time the moon winked at him
 through the window.
 "Why couldn't you find the keyhole,
 Spruggins?"
 'Taunted the wind.
 "I can find the keyhole."
 And the wind, thin as a wire,
 Darted in and seized the candle flame
 And knocked it over to one side
 And pummelled it down — down —
 down — !
 But Mr. Spruggins held the candle so
 close that it singed his chin,
 And ran and stumbled up the stairs in
 a surprisingly agile manner,
 For the wind through the keyhole kept
 saying, "Spruggins! Spruggins!" be-
 hind him.
 The fire in his bedroom burned brightly.
 The room with its crimson bed and win-
 dow curtains
 Was as red and glowing as a carbuncle.
 It was still and warm.
 There was no wind here, for the windows
 were fastened;
 And no moon,
 For the curtains were drawn.
 The candle flame stood up like a pointed
 pear
 In a wide brass dish.
 Mr. Spruggins sighed with content;
 He was safe at home.
 The fire glowed — red and yellow roses
 In the black basket of the grate —
 And the bed with its crimson hangings
 Seemed a great peony,
 Wide open and placid.
 Mr. Spruggins slipped off his top-coat and
 his muffler.
 He slipped off his bottle-green coat
 And his flowered waistcoat.
 He put on a flannel dressing-gown,

Out o' doors was as flat as the palm o'
 my hand,
 Ther warn't a hump or a holler
 Fer as you could see.
 It was so quiet.
 The snappin' o' the branches back in the
 wood-lot
 Sounded like pistol shots.
 Ed was out all day
 Same as usual.
 An' it seemed he talked less'n ever.
 He didn't even say 'Good-mornin',' once
 or twice,
 An' jest nodded or shook his head when
 I asked him things.
 On Monday he said he'd got to go over
 to Benton
 Fer some oats.
 I'd oughter ha' gone with him,
 But 'twas washin' day
 An' I was afeared the fine weather'd
 break,
 An' I couldn't do my dryin'.
 All my life I'd done my work punctual,
 An' I couldn't fix my conscience
 To go junketin' on a washin'-day.
 I can't tell you what that day was to me.
 It dragged an' dragged,
 Fer ther warn't no Ed ter break it in the
 middle
 Fer dinner.
 Every time I stopped stirrin' the water
 I heerd the whisperin' all about me.
 I stopped oftener'n I should
 To see ef 'twas still ther,
 An' it al'ays was.
 An' gittin' louder
 It seemed ter me.
 Once I threw up the winder to feel the
 wind.
 'That seemed most alive somehow.
 But the woods looked so kind of men-
 acin'
 I closed it quick
 An' started to mangle's hard's I could,
 The squeakin' was comfortin'.
 Well, Ed come home 'bout four.
 I seen him down the road,

An' I run out through the shed inter
 th' barn
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 An' what he'd done.
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 With the loneliness
 An' Ed payin' no attention
 Like somethin' warn't livin'.
 All of a sudden it come,
 I don't know what,
 But I jest couldn't stand no more.
 It didn't seem's though that was Ed,
 An' it didn't seem as though I was me,
 I had to break a way out somehow,
 Somethin' was closin' in
 An' I was stiffin'.
 Ed's loggin' axe was ther,
 An' I took it.
 Oh, my God!
 I can't see nothin' else afore me all the
 time.
 I run out inter th' woods,
 Seemed as ef they was pullin' me,
 An' all the time I was wadin' through the
 snow
 I seed Ed in front of me
 Where I'd laid him.
 An' I see him now.
 There! There!
 What you holdin' me fer?
 I want ter go to Ed,
 He's bleedin'.
 Stop holdin' me.
 I got to go.
 I'm comin', Ed.
 I'll be ther in a minit.
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 In the black basket of the grate —
 And the bed with its crimson hangings
 Seemed a great peony,
 Wide open and placid.
 Mr. Spruggins slipped off his top-coat and
 his muffler.
 He slipped off his bottle-green coat
 And his flowered waistcoat.
 He put on a flannel dressing-gown,

And tied a peaked night cap under his chin
 He wound his large gold watch
 And placed it under his pillow
 Then he tiptoed over to the window and
 pulled back the curtain
 There was the moon dodging in and out
 of the clouds,
 But behind him was his quiet candle
 There was the wind whisking along the
 street
 The window rattled, but it was fastened
 Did the wind say, 'Spruggins'?'
 All Mr Spruggins heard was 'S s s s —'
 Dying away down the street
 He dropped the curtain and got into bed
 Martha had been in the last thing with
 the warming pin,
 The bed was warm,
 And Mr Spruggins sank into feathers,
 With the familiar ticking of his watch
 just under his head
 Mr Spruggins dozed
 He had forgotten to put out the candle,
 But it did not make much difference as
 the fire was so bright
 Too bright!
 The red and yellow roses pricked his eye
 lids,
 They scorched him back to consciousness
 He tried to shift his position,
 He could not move
 Something weighed him down,
 He could not breathe
 He was gasping,
 Pinned down and suffocating
 He opened his eyes
 The curtains of the window were flung
 back,
 The fire and the candle were out,
 And the room was filled with green moon
 light
 And pressed against the window pane
 Was a wide, round face,
 Winking — winking —
 Solemnly dropping one eyelid after the
 other
 Tick — tock — went the watch under
 his pillow,
 Wink — wink — went the face at the
 window
 It was not the fire roses which had
 pricked him,
 It was the winking eyes
 Mr Spruggins tried to bounce up,

He could not, because —
 His heart flapped up into his mouth
 And fell back dead
 On his chest was a fat pink pig,
 On the pig a blackamoor
 With a ten pound weight for a cap
 His mustachios kept curling up and down
 like angry snakes,
 And his eyes rolled round and round,
 With the pupils coming into sight, and
 disappearing,
 And appearing again on the other side
 The holsters at his saddle bow were two
 port bottles,
 And a curved table knife hung at his belt
 for a scimitar,
 While a fork and a keg of spirits were
 strapped to the saddle behind
 He dug his spurs into the pig,
 Which trampled and snorted,
 And stamped its cloven feet deeper into
 Mr Spruggins
 Then the green light on the floor began
 to undulate
 It heaved and hollowed,
 It rose like a tide,
 Sea green,
 Full of claws and scales
 And wriggles
 The air above his bed began to move,
 It weighed over him
 In a mass of draggled feathers
 Not one lifted to stir the air
 They drooped and dripped
 With a smell of port wine and brandy,
 Closing down, slowly,
 Trickling drops on the bed quilt
 Suddenly the window fell in with a great
 scatter of glass,
 And the moon burst into the room,
 Sizzling — 'S s s s — Spruggins! Sprug
 gins!'
 It rolled toward him,
 A green ball of flame,
 With two eyes in the center,
 A red eye and a yellow eye,
 Dropping their lids slowly,
 One after the other
 Mr Spruggins tried to scream,
 But the blackamoor
 Leapt off his pig
 With a cry,
 Drew his scimitar,
 And plunged it into Mr Spruggins's
 mouth

Mr. Spruggins got up in the cold dawn
 And remade the fire.
 Then he crept back to bed
 By the light which seeped in under the
 window curtains,
 And lay there, shivering,
 While the bells of St. George the Martyr
 chimed the quarter after seven.

THE PAPER WINDMILL

The little boy pressed his face against the window-pane and looked out at the bright sunshiny morning. The cobblestones of the square glistened like mica. In the trees, a breeze danced and pranced, and shook drops of sunlight like falling golden coins into the brown water of the canal. Down stream slowly drifted a long string of galliots piled with crimson cheeses. The little boy thought they looked as if they were roc's eggs, blocks of big ruby eggs. He said, "Ohi" with delight, and pressed against the window with all his might.

The golden cock on the top of the *Stadhuis* gleamed. His beak was open like a pair of scissors and a narrow piece of blue sky was wedged in it. "Cock-a-doodle-do," cried the little boy. "Can't you hear me through the window, Gold Cocky? Cock-a-doodle-do! You should crow when you see the eggs of your cousin, the great roc." But the golden cock stood stock still, with his fine tail blowing in the wind. He could not understand the little boy, for he said "Cocorico" when he said anything. But he was hung in the air to swing, not to sing. His eyes glittered to the bright West wind, and the crimson cheeses drifted away down the canal.

It was very dull there in the big room. Outside in the square, the wind was playing tag with some fallen leaves. A man passed, with a dogcart beside him full of smart, new milkcans. They rattled out a gay tune: "Tiddity-tum-ti-ti. Have some milk for your tea. Cream for your coffee to drink to-night, thick, and smooth, and sweet, and white," and the man's sabots beat an accompaniment: "Plop! trop! milk for your tea. Plop!

trop! drink it to-night." It was very pleasant out there, but it was lonely here in the big room. The little boy gulped at a tear.

It was queer how dull all his toys were. They were so still. Nothing was still in the square. If he took his eyes away a moment it had changed. The milkman had disappeared round the corner, there was only an old woman with a basket of green stuff on her head, picking her way over the shiny stones. But the wind pulled the leaves in the basket this way and that, and displayed them to beautiful advantage. The sun patted them condescendingly on their flat surfaces, and they seemed sprinkled with silver. The little boy sighed as he looked at his disordered toys on the floor. They were motionless, and their colours were dull. The dark wainscoting absorbed the sun. There was none left for toys.

The square was quite empty now. Only the wind ran round and round it, spinning. Away over in the corner where a street opened into the square, the wind had stopped. Stopped running, that is, for it never stopped spinning. It whirled, and whirled, and gyrated, and turned. It burned like a great coloured sun. It hummed, and buzzed, and sparked, and darted. There were flashes of blue, and long smearing lines of saffron, and quick jabs of green. And over it all was a sheen like a myriad cut diamonds. Round and round it went, the huge wind-wheel, and the little boy's head reeled with watching it. The whole square was filled with its rays, blazing and leaping round after one another, faster and faster. The little boy could not speak, he could only gaze, staring in amaze.

The wind-wheel was coming down the square. Nearer and nearer it came, a great disk of spinning flame. It was opposite the window now, and the little boy could see it plainly, but it was something more than the wind which he saw. A man was carrying a huge fan-shaped frame on his shoulder, and stuck in it were many little painted paper windmills, each one scurrying round in the breeze. They were

bright and beautiful, and the sight was one to please anybody, and how much more a little boy who had only stupid, motionless toys to enjoy.

The little boy clapped his hands, and his eyes danced and whizzed, for the circling windmills made him dizzy. Closer and closer came the windmill man, and held up his big fan to the little boy in the window of the Ambassador's house. Only a pane of glass between the boy and the windmills. They slid round before his eyes in rapidly revolving splendour. There were wheels and wheels of colours—big, little, thick, thin—all one clear, perfect spin. The windmill vendor dipped and raised them again, and the little boy's face was glued to the window-pane. Oh! What a glorious, wonderful plaything! Rings and rings of windy colour always moving! How had any one ever preferred those other toys which never stirred. "Nursie, come quickly. Look! I want a windmill. See! It is never still. You will buy me one, won't you? I want that silver one, with the big ring of blue."

So a servant was sent to buy that one: silver, ringed with blue, and smartly it twirled about in the servant's hands as he stood a moment to pay the vendor. Then he entered the house, and in another minute he was standing in the nursery door, with some crumpled paper on the end of a stick which he held out to the little boy. "But I wanted a windmill which went round," cried the little boy. "That is the one you asked for, Master Charles," Nursie was a bit impatient, she had mending to do. "See it is silver, and here is the blue." "But it is only a blue streak," sobbed the little boy. "I wanted a blue ring, and this silver doesn't sparkle." "Well, Master Charles, that is what you wanted, now run away and play with it, for I am very busy."

The little boy hid his tears against the friendly window-pane. On the floor lay the motionless, crumpled bit of paper on the end of its stick. But far away across

the square was the windmill vendor, with his big wheel of whirling splendour. It spun round in a blaze like a whirling rainbow, and the sun gleamed upon it, and the wind whipped it, until it seemed a maze of spattering diamonds. "*Cocoricó!*" crowed the golden cock on the top of the *Stadhuis*. "That is something worth crowing for." But the little boy did not hear him, he was sobbing over the crumpled bit of paper on the floor.

THE RED LACQUER MUSIC-STAND

A music-stand of crimson lacquer, long since brought
In some fast clipper-ship from China, quaintly wrought
With bossed and carven flowers and fruits in blackening gold,
The slender shaft all twined about and thickly scrolled
With vine leaves and young twisted tendrils, whirling, curling,
Flinging their new shoots over the four wings, and swirling
Out on the three wide feet in golden lumps and streams;
Petals and apples in high relief, and where the seams
Are worn with handling, through the polished crimson sheen,
Long streaks of black, the under lacquer, shine out clean.
Four desks, adjustable, to suit the heights of players
Sitting to viols or standing up to sing, four layers
Of music to serve every instrument, are there,
And on the apex a large flat-topped golden pear.
It burns in red and yellow, dusty, smouldering lights,
When the sun flares the old chamber with its flights
And skips upon the crystal knobs of dim sideboards,
Legless and mouldy, and hops, glint to glint, on hoards
Of scythes, and spades, and dinner-horns, so the old tools

Arc little candles throwing brightness
 round in pools.
 With Oriental splendour, red and gold,
 the dust
 Covering its flames like smoke and thin-
 ning as a gust
 Of brighter sunshine makes the colours
 leap and range,
 The strange old music-stand seems to
 strike out and change;
 To stroke and tear the darkness with
 sharp golden claws;
 To dart a forked, vermilion tongue from
 open jaws;
 To puff out bitter smoke which chokes
 the sun; and fade
 Back to a still, faint outline obliterate in
 shade.
 Creeping up the ladder into the loft, the
 Boy
 Stands watching, very still, prickly and
 hot with joy.
 He sees the dusty sun-mote slit by streaks
 of red,
 He sees it split and stream, and all about
 his head
 Spikes and spears of gold are licking,
 pricking, flicking,
 Scratching against the walls and furniture,
 and nicking
 The darkness into sparks, chipping away
 the gloom.
 The Boy's nose smarts with the pungence
 in the room.
 The wind pushes an elm branch from
 before the door
 And the sun widens out all along the floor,
 Filling the barn-chamber with white,
 straightforward light,
 So not one blurred outline can tease the
 mind to fright.

*"O All ye Works of the Lord, Bless ye
 the Lord;
 Praise Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
 O let the Earth Bless the Lord; Yea,
 let it Praise
 Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
 O ye Mountains and Hills, Bless ye the
 Lord; Praise
 Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
 O All ye Green Things upon the Earth,
 Bless ye the Lord; Praise Him, and
 Magnify Him for ever."*

The Boy will praise his God on an altar
 builded fair,
 Will heap it with the Works of the Lord.
 In the morning air,
 Spices shall burn on it, and by their pale
 smoke curled,
 Like shoots of all the Green Things, the
 God of this bright World
 Shall see the Boy's desire to pay his debt
 of praise.
 The Boy turns round about, seeking with
 careful gaze
 An altar meet and worthy, but each table
 and chair
 Has some defect, each piece is needing
 some repair
 To perfect it; the chairs have broken legs
 and backs,
 The tables are uneven, and every highboy
 lacks
 A handle or a drawer, the desks are
 bruised and worn,
 And even a wide sofa has its cane seat
 torn.
 Only in the gloom far in the corner there
 The lacquer music-stand is elegant and
 rare,
 Clear and slim of line, with its four wings
 outspread,
 The sound of old quartets, a tenuous,
 faint thread,
 Hanging and floating over it, it stands
 supreme—
 Black, and gold, and crimson, in one
 twisted scheme!

A candle on the bookcase feels a draught
 and wavers,
 Stippling the white-washed walls with
 dancing shades and quavers.
 A bed-post, grown colossal, jigs about
 the ceiling,
 And shadows, strangely altered, stain the
 walls, revealing
 Eagles, and rabbits, and weird faces
 pulled awry,
 And hands which fetch and carry things
 incessantly.
 Under the Eastern window, where the
 morning sun
 Must touch it, stands the music-stand,
 and on each one
 Of its broad platforms is a pyramid of
 stones,

And metals, and dried flowers, and pine
 and hemlock cones,
 An oriole's nest with the four eggs neatly
 blown,
 The rattle of a rattlesnake, and three
 large brown
 Butternuts uncracked, six butterflies im-
 paled
 With a green luna moth, a snake-skin
 freshly scaled,
 Some sunflower seeds, wampum, and a
 bloody-tooth shell,
 A blue jay feather, all together piled pell-
 mell
 The stand will hold no more. The Boy
 with humming head
 Looks once again, blows out the light,
 and creeps to bed.

The Boy keeps solemn vigil, while out-
 side the wind
 Blows gustily and clear, and slaps against
 the blind.
 He hardly tries to sleep, so sharp his
 ecstasy
 It burns his soul to emptiness, and sets
 it free
 For adoration only, for worship. Dedi-
 cate,
 His unsheathed soul is naked in its
 novitiate.
 The hours strike below from the clock
 on the stair.
 The Boy is a white flame suspiring in
 prayer.
 Morning will bring the sun, the Golden
 Eye of Him
 Whose splendour must be veiled by
 starry cherubim,
 Whose Feet shimmer like crystal in the
 streets of Heaven.
 Like an open rose the sun will stand up
 even,
 Fronting the window-sill, and when the
 casement glows
 Rose-red with the new-blown morning,
 then the fire which flows
 From the sun will fall upon the altar and
 ignite
 The spices, and his sacrifice will burn in
 perfumed light.
 Over the music-stand the ghosts of
 sounds will swim,
 Viols *d'amore* and *hautbois* accorded to
 a hymn.

The Boy will see the faintest breath of
 angels' wings
 Fanning the smoke, and voices will flower
 through the strings.
 He dares no farther vision, and with
 scalding eyes
 Waits upon the daylight and his great
 emprise.

The cold, grey light of dawn was whiten-
 ing the wall
 When the Boy, fine-drawn by sleepless-
 ness, started his ritual.
 He washed, all shivering and pointed like
 a flame.
 He threw the shutters open, and in the
 window-frame
 The morning glimmered like a tarnished
 Venice glass.
 He took his Chinese pastilles and put
 them in a mass
 Upon the mantelpiece till he could seek
 a plate
 Worthy to hold them burning. Alas! He
 had been late
 In thinking of this need, and now he
 could not find
 Platter or saucer rare enough to ease his
 mind.
 The house was not astir, and he dared
 not go down
 Into the barn-chamber, lest some door
 should be blown
 And slam before the draught he made as
 he went out.
 The light was growing yellower, and still
 he looked about.
 A flash of almost crimson from the gilded
 pear
 Upon the music-stand, startled him wait-
 ing there.
 The sun would rise and he would meet
 it unprepared,
 Labelled a fool in having missed what
 he had dared.
 He ran across the room, took his pastilles
 and laid
 Them on the flat-topped pear, most care-
 fully displayed
 To light with ease, then stood a little
 to one side,
 Focussed a burning-glass and painstakingly
 tried
 To hold it angled so the bunched and
 prised rays

Should leap upon each other and spring
into a blaze.
Sharp as a whirling edge of disked, car-
nation flame,
Gem-hard and cutting upward, slowly the
round sun came.
The arrowed fire caught the burning-
glass and glanced,
Split to a multitude of pointed spears,
and lanced,
A deeper, hotter flame, it took the incense
pile
Which welcomed it and broke into a
little smile
Of yellow flamelets, creeping, crackling,
thrusting up,
A golden, red-slashed lily in a lacquer cup.

*"O ye Fire and Heat, Bless ye the
Lord; Praise
Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
O ye Winter and Summer, Bless ye the
Lord; Praise
Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
O ye Nights and Days, Bless ye the
Lord; Praise
Him, and Magnify Him for ever.
O ye Lightnings and Clouds, Bless ye
the Lord;
Praise Him, and Magnify Him for ever."*

A moment so it hung, wide-curved,
bright-petalled, seeming
A chalice foamed with sunrise. The Boy
woke from his dreaming.
A spike of flame had caught the card of
butterflies,
The oriole's nest took fire, soon all four
galleries
Where he had spread his treasures were
become one tongue
Of gleaming, brutal fire. The Boy in-
stantly swung
His pitcher off the wash-stand and turned
it upside down.
The flames drooped back and sizzled, and
all his senses grown
Acute by fear, the Boy grabbed the quilt
from his bed
And flung it over all, and then with ach-
ing head
He watched the early sunshine glint on
the remains
Of his holy offering. The lacquer stand
had stains

Ugly and charred all over, and where the
golden pear
Had been, a deep, black hole gaped
miscrably. His dear
Treasures were puffs of ashes; only the
stones were there,
Winking in the brightness.

The clock upon the stair
Struck five, and in the kitchen someone
shook a grate.
The Boy began to dress, for it was get-
ting late.

SPRING DAY

BATH

The day is fresh-washed and fair, and
there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in
the air.

The sunshine pours in at the bath-
room window and bores through the
water in the bath-tub in lathes and
planes of greenish-white. It cleaves the
water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks
it to bright light.

Little spots of sunshine lie on the sur-
face of the water and dance, dance, and
their reflections wobble deliciously over
the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them
whirling, reeling. I move a foot, and
the planes of light in the water jar. I lie
back and laugh, and let the green-white
water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow
over me. The day is almost too bright
to bear, the green water covers me from
the too bright day. I will lie here awhile
and play with the water and the sun
spots.

The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps
by the window, and there is a whiff of
tulips and narcissus in the air.

BREAKFAST TABLE

In the fresh-washed sunlight, the break-
fast table is decked and white. It offers
itself in flat surrender, tendering tastes,
and smells, and colours, and metals, and
grains, and the white cloth falls over its
side, draped and wide. Wheels of white
glitter in the silver coffee-pot, hot and
spinning like catherine-wheels, they
whirl, and twirl—and my eyes begin to
smart, the little white, dazzling wheels
prick them like darts. Placid and peace-

ful, the rolls of bread spread themselves in the sun to bask. A stack of butter pats, pyramidal, shout orange through the white, scream, flutter call 'Yellow! Yellow! Yellow!' Coffee steam rises in a stream, clouds the silver tea service with mist, and twists up into the sunlight, revolved, involuted, spirring higher and higher, fluting in a thin spiral up the high blue sky. A crow flies by and croaks at the coffee steam. The day is new and fair with good smells in the air.

WALK

Over the street the white clouds meet, and sheer away without touching.

On the sidewalks, boys are playing marbles. Glass marbles, with amber and blue hearts, roll together and part with a sweet clashing noise. The boys strike them with black and red striped agates. The glass marbles spit crimson when they are hit, and slip into the gutters under rushing brown water. I smell tulips and narcissus in the air, but there are no flowers anywhere, only white dust whipping up the street, and a girl with a gay Spring hat and blowing skirts. The dust and the wind flirt at her ankles and her neat, high-heeled patent leather shoes. Tap, tap, the little heels pat the pavement, and the wind rustles among the flowers on her hat.

A water cart crawls slowly on the other side of the way. It is green and gay with new paint, and rumbles contentedly, sprinkling clear water over the white dust. Clear zigzagging water, which smells of tulips and narcissus.

The thickening branches make a pink *grisaille* against the blue sky.

Whoop! The clouds go dashing at each other and sheer away just in time. Whoop! And a man's hat careers down the street in front of the white dust, leaps into the branches of a tree, veers away and trundles ahead of the wind, jarring the sunlight into spokes of rose colour and green.

A motor car cuts a swathe through the bright air, sharp beaked, irresistible, shouting to the wind to make way. A glare of dust and sunshine tosses together behind it, and settles down. The

sky is quiet and high, and the morning is fair with fresh washed air.

MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON

Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw. Flare of sunshine down side streets. Eddies of light in the windows of chemists' shops, with their blue, gold, purple jars, darting colours far into the crowd. Loud bangs and tremors, murmurings out of high windows, whirring of machine belts, blurring of horses and motors. A quick spin and shudder of brakes on an electric car, and the jar of a church bell knocking against the metal blue of the sky. I am a piece of the town, a bit of blown dust, thrust along with the crowd. Proud to feel the pavement under me, reeling with feet. Feet tramping, skipping, lagging, dragging, plodding doggedly, or springing up and advancing on firm elastic insteps. A boy is selling papers, I smell them clean and new from the press. They are fresh like the air, and pungent as tulips and narcissus.

The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop windows, putting out their contents in a flood of flame.

NIGHT AND SLEEP

The day takes her ease in slippers and low. Electric signs gleam out along the shop fronts, following each other. They grow, and grow, and blow into patterns of fire flowers as the sky fades. Trades scream in spots of light at the unruffled night. Twinkle, jab, snap, that means a new play, and over the way plop, drop, quiver, is the sidelong sliver of a watchmaker's sign with its length on another street. A gigantic mug of beer effervesces to the atmosphere over a tall building, but the sky is high and has her own stars, why should she heed ours?

I leave the city with speed. Wheels whirl to take me back to my trees and my quietness. The breeze which blows with me is fresh washed and clean, it has come but recently from the high sky.

There are no flowers in bloom yet, but the earth of my garden smells of tulips and narcissus.

My room is tranquil and friendly. Out of the window I can see the distant city, a band of twinkling gems, little flower-heads with no stems. I cannot see the beer-glass, nor the letters of the restaurants and shops I passed, now the signs blur and all together make the city, glowing on a night of fine weather, like a garden stirring and blowing for the Spring.

The night is fresh-washed and fair and there is a whiff of flowers in the air.

Wrap me close, sheets of lavender. Pour your blue and purple dreams into my ears. The breeze whispers at the shutters and mutters queer tales of old days, and cobbled streets, and youths leaping their horses down marble stairways. Pale blue lavender, you are the colour of the sky when it is fresh-washed and fair . . . I smell the stars . . . they are like tulips and narcissus . . . I smell them in the air.

THE DINNER-PARTY

FISH

"So . . ." they said,
With their wine-glasses delicately poised,
Mocking at the thing they cannot understand.

"So . . ." they said again,
Amused and insolent.
The silver on the table glittered,
And the red wine in the glasses
Seemed the blood I had wasted
In a foolish cause.

GAME

The gentleman with the grey-and-black
whiskers
Sneered languidly over his quail.
Then my heart flew up and laboured,
And I burst from my own holding
And hurled myself forward.
With straight blows I beat upon him,
Furiously, with red-hot anger, I thrust
against him.
But my weapon slithered over his
polished surface,

And I recoiled upon myself,
Panting.

DRAWING-ROOM

In a dress all softness and half-tones,
Indolent and half-reclined,
She lay upon a couch,
With the firelight reflected in her jewels.
But her eyes had no reflection,
Thy swam in a grey smoke,
The smoke of smouldering ashes,
The smoke of her cindered heart.

COFFEE

They sat in a circle with their coffee-cups.
One dropped in a lump of sugar,
One stirred with a spoon.
I saw them as a circle of ghosts
Sipping blackness out of beautiful china,
And mildly protesting against my coarseness
In being alive.

TALK

They took dead men's souls
And pinned them on their breasts for
ornament;
Their cuff-links and tiaras
Were gems dug from a grave;
They were ghouls battenning on exhumed
thoughts;
And I took a green liqueur from a servant
So that he might come near me
And give me the comfort of a living
thing.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK

The front door was hard and heavy,
It shut behind me on the house of ghosts.
I flattened my feet on the pavement
To feel it solid under me;
I ran my hand along the railings
And shook them,
And pressed their pointed bars
Into my palms.
The hurt of it reassured me,
And I did it again and again
Until they were bruised.
When I woke in the night
I laughed to find them aching,
For only living flesh can suffer.

STRAVINSKY'S THREE PIECES
"GROTESQUES,"
FOR STRING QUARTET

FIRST MOVEMENT

Thin-voiced, nasal pipes
Drawing sound out and out
Until it is a screeching thread,
Sharp and cutting, sharp and cutting,
It hurts.
Whcc-c-e!
Bump! Bump! Tong-ti-bump!
There are drums here,
Banging,
And wooden shoes beating the round,
grey stones
Of the market-place.
Whcc-c-e!
Sabots slapping the worn, old stones,
And a shaking and cracking of dancing
bones;
Clumsy and hard they are,
And uneven,
Losing half a beat
Because the stones are slippery.
Bump-c-ty-tong! Whee-e! Tong!
The thin Spring leaves
Shake to the banging of shoes.
Shoes beat, slap,
Shuffle, rap,
And the nasal pipes squeal with their
pigs' voices,
Little pigs' voices
Weaving among the dancers,
A fine white thread
Linking up the dancers,
Bang! Bump! Tong!
Petticoats,
Stockings,
Sabots,
Delirium flapping its thigh-bones;
Red, blue, yellow,
Drunkenness steaming in colours;
Red, yellow, blue,
Colours and flesh weaving together,
In and out, with the dance,
Coarse stuffs and hot flesh weaving to-
gether.
Pigs' cries white and tenuous,
White and painful,
White and —
Bump!
Tong!

SECOND MOVEMENT

Pale violin music whiffs across the moon,
A pale smoke of violin music blows over
the moon,
Cherry petals fall and flutter,
And the white Pierrot,
Wreathed in the smoke of the violins,
Splashed with cherry petals falling, fall-
ing,
Claws a grave for himself in the fresh
earth
With his finger-nails.

THIRD MOVEMENT

An organ growls in the heavy roof-groins
of a church,
It wheezes and coughs.
The nave is blue with incense,
Writhing, twisting,
Snaking over the heads of the chanting
priests.

Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine;

The priests whine their bastard Latin
And the censers swing and click.
The priests walk endlessly
Round and round,
Droning their Latin
Off the key.

The organ crashes out in a flaring chord,
And the priests hitch their chant up half
a tone.

Dies illa, dies irae,

Calamitatis et miseriae,

Dies magna et amara valde.

A wind rattles the leaded windows.

The little pear-shaped candle flames leap
and flutter,

Dies illa, dies irae;

The swaying smoke drifts over the altar,
Calamitatis et miseriae;

The shuffling priests sprinkle holy water,
Dies magna et amara valde;

And there is a stark stillness in the midst
of them

Stretched upon a bier.

His ears are stone to the organ,
His eyes are flint to the candles,
His body is ice to the water.

Chant, priests,

Whine, shuffle, genuflect,

He will always be as rigid as he is now
Until he crumbles away in a dust heap.

*Lacrymosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla
Judicandus homo reus.*

Above the grey pillars the roof is in darkness.

TOWNS IN COLOUR

I

RED SLIPPERS

Red slippers in a shop-window, and outside in the street, flaws of grey, windy sleet!

Behind the polished glass, the slippers hang in long threads of red, festooning from the ceiling like stalactites of blood, flooding the eyes of passers-by with dripping colour, jamming their crimson reflections against the windows of cabs and tramcars, screaming their claret and salmon into the teeth of the sleet, plopping their little round maroon lights upon the tops of umbrellas.

The row of white, sparkling shop fronts is gashed and bleeding, it bleeds red slippers. They spout under the electric light, fluid and fluctuating, a hot rain — and freeze again to red slippers, myriad multiplied in the mirror side of the window.

They balance upon arched insteps like springing bridges of crimson lacquer; they swing up over curved heels like whirling tanagers sucked in a wind-pocket; they flatten out, heelless, like lily ponds, flared and burnished by red rockets.

Snap, snap, they are cracker-sparks of scarlet in the white, monotonous block of shops.

They plunge the clangour of billions of vermilion trumpets into the crowd outside, and echo in faint rose over the pavement.

People hurry by, for these are only shoes, and in a window, farther down, is a big lotus bud of cardboard whose petals open every few minutes and reveal a wax doll, with staring bead eyes and flaxen hair, lolling awkwardly in its flower chair.

One has often seen shoes, but whoever saw a cardboard lotus bud before?

The flaws of grey, windy sleet beat on the shop-window where there are only red slippers.

II

THOMPSON'S LUNCH ROOM — GRAND CENTRAL STATION

Study in Whites

Wax-white —

Floor, ceiling, walls.

Ivory shadows

Over the pavement

Polished to cream surfaces

By constant sweeping.

The big room is coloured like the petals

Of a great magnolia,

And has a patina

Of flower bloom

Which makes it shine dimly

Under the electric lamps.

Chairs are ranged in rows

Like scpia seeds

Waiting fulfilment.

The chalk-white spot of a cook's cap

Moves unglossily against the vaguely
bright wall —

Dull chalk-white striking the retina like
a blow

Through the wavering uncertainty of
steam.

Vitreous-white of glasses with green re-
flections,

Ice-green carboys, shifting — greener,
bluer — with the jar of moving water.

Jagged green-white bowls of pressed glass

Rearing snow-peaks of chipped sugar

Above the lighthouse-shaped castors

Of grey pepper and grey-white salt.

Grey-white placards: "Oyster Stew, Corn-
beef Hash, Frankfurters":

Marble slabs veined with words in mean-
dering lines.

Dropping on the white counter like horn
notes

Through a web of violins,

The flat yellow lights of oranges,

The cube-red splashes of apples,

In high plated *épergnes*.

The electric clock jerks every half-minute:

"Coming! — Fast!"

"Three beef-steaks and a chicken-pic,"
 Bawled through a slide while the clock
 jerks heavily.
 A man carries a china mug of coffee to
 a distant chair.
 Two rice puddings and a salmon salad
 Are pushed over the counter;
 The unfulfilled chairs open to receive
 them.
 A spoon falls upon the floor with the
 impact of metal striking stone,
 And the sound throws across the room
 Sharp, invisible zigzags
 Of silver.

III

AN OPERA HOUSE

Within the gold square of the proscenium
 arch,
 A curtain of orange velvet hangs in stiff
 folds,
 Its tassels jarring slightly when someone
 crosses the stage behind.
 Gold carving edges the balconies,
 Rims the boxes,
 Runs up and down fluted pillars.
 Little knife-stabs of gold
 Shine out whenever a box door is opened.
 Gold clusters
 Flash in soft explosions
 On the blue darkness,
 Suck back to a point,
 And disappear.
 Hoops of gold
 Circle necks, wrists, fingers,
 Pierce ears,
 Poise on heads
 And fly up above them in coloured
 sparkles.
 Gold!
 Gold!
 The opera house is a treasure-box of gold.
 Gold in a broad sinear across the orches-
 tra pit:
 Gold of horns, trumpets, tubas;
 Gold --- spun-gold, twittering-gold, snap-
 ping-gold
 Of harps.
 The conductor raises his baton,
 The brass blares out
 Crass, crude,
 Parvenu, fat, powerful,
 Golden.

Rich as the fat, clapping hands in the
 boxes.
 Cymbals, gigantic, coin-shaped,
 Crash.
 The orange curtain parts
 And the prima-donna steps forward.
 One note,
 A drop: transparent, iridescent,
 A gold bubble,
 It floats . . . floats . . .
 And bursts against the lips of a bank
 president
 In the grand tier.

IV

AFTERNOON RAIN IN STATE STREET

Cross-hatchings of rain against grey walls,
 Slant lines of black rain
 In front of the up and down, wet stone
 sides of buildings.
 Below,
 Greasy, shiny, black, horizontal,
 The street.
 And over it, umbrellas,
 Black polished dots
 Struck to white
 An instant,
 Stream in two flat lines
 Slipping past each other with the smooth-
 ness of oil.
 Like a four-sided wedge
 The Custom House Tower
 Pokes at the low, flat sky,
 Pushing it farther and farther up,
 Lifting it away from the house-tops,
 Lifting it in one piece as though it were
 a sheet of tin,
 With the lever of its apex.
 The cross-hatchings of rain cut the Tower
 obliquely,
 Scratching lines of black wire across it,
 Mutilating its perpendicular grey surface
 With the sharp precision of tools.
 The city is rigid with straight lines and
 angles,
 A chequered table of blacks and greys.
 Oblong blocks of flatness
 Crawl by with low-gearred engines,
 And pass to short upright squares
 Shrinking with distance.
 A steamer in the basin blows its whistle,
 And the sound shoots across the rain
 hatchings,

A narrow, level bar of steel.
 Hard cubes of lemon
 Superimpose themselves upon the fronts
 of buildings
 As the windows light up.
 But the lemon cubes are edged with
 angles
 Upon which they cannot impinge.
 Up, straight, down, straight — square.
 Crumpled grey-white papers
 Blow along the side-walks,
 Contorted, horrible,
 Without curves.
 A horse steps in a puddle,
 And white, glaring water spurts up
 In stiff, outflaring lines,
 Like the rattling stems of reeds.
 The city is heraldic with angles,
 A sombre escutcheon of argent and sable
 And countercoloured bends of rain
 Hung over a four-square civilization.
 When a street lamp comes out,
 I gaze at it for full thirty seconds
 To rest my brain with the suffering, round
 brilliance of its globe.

V

AN AQUARIUM

Streaks of green and yellow iridescence,
 Silver shiftings,
 Rings veering out of rings,
 Silver — gold —
 Grey-green opaqueness sliding down,
 With sharp white bubbles
 Shooting and dancing,
 Flinging quickly outward.
 Nosing the bubbles,
 Swallowing them,
 Fish.
 Blue shadows against silver-saffron water,
 The light rippling over them
 In steel-bright tremors.
 Outspread translucent fins
 Flute, fold, and relapse;
 The threaded light prints through them
 on the pebbles
 In scarcely tarnished twinklings.

Curving of spotted spines,
 Slow up-shifts,
 Lazy convolutions:
 Then a sudden swift straightening
 And darting below:
 Oblique grey shadows
 Athwart a pale casement.
 Roped and curled,
 Green man-eating eels
 Slumber in undulate rhythms,
 With crests laid horizontal on their
 backs.
 Barred fish,
 Striped fish,
 Uneven disks of fish,
 Slip, slide, whirl, turn,
 And never touch.
 Metallic blue fish,
 With fins wide and yellow and swaying
 Like Oriental fans,
 Hold the sun in their bellies
 And glow with light:
 Blue brilliance cut by black bars.
 An oblong pane of straw-coloured shimmer,
 Across it, in a tangent,
 A smear of rose, black, silver,
 Short twists and upstartings,
 Rose-black, in a setting of bubbles:
 Sunshine playing between red and black
 flowers
 On a blue and gold lawn.
 Shadows and polished surfaces,
 Facets of mauve and purple,
 A constant modulation of values.
 Shaft-shaped,
 With green bead eyes,
 Thick-nosed,
 Heliotrope-coloured;
 Swift spots of chrysolite and coral;
 In the midst of green, pearl, amethyst
 irradiations.
 Outside,
 A willow-tree flickers
 With little white jerks,
 And long blue waves
 Rise steadily beyond the outer islands.

CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE

SEA-BLUE AND BLOOD-RED

I

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Blue as the tip of a salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea. Up to meet it, in a flat band of glaring colour, rises the water. The sky is unspiced by clouds, but the sea is flecked with pink and white light shadows, and silver scintillations snip-snap over the tops of the waves.

Something moves along the horizon. A puff of wind blowing up the edges of the silver-blue sky? Clouds! Clouds! Great thunderheads marching along the skyline! No, by Jove! The sun shining on sails! Vessels, hull down, with only their tiers of canvas showing. Beautiful ballooning thunderheads dipping one after another below the blue band of the sea.

II

NAPLES

Red tiles, yellow stucco, layer on layer of windows, roofs, and balconies, Naples pushes up the hill away from the curving bay. A red, half-closed eye, Vesuvius watches and waits. All Naples prates of this and that, and runs about its little business, shouting, bawling, incessantly calling its wares. Fish frying, macaroni drying, seven feet piles of red and white broccoli, grapes heaped high with rosemary, sliced pomegranates dripping seeds, plucked and bleeding chickens, figs on spits, lemons in baskets, melons cut and quartered nicely, "*Ah, che bella cosa!*" They even sell water, clear crystal water for a paul or two. And everything done to a hullabaloo. They jabber over cheese, they chatter over wine, they gabble at the corners in the bright sunshine. And piercing through the noise is the beggar-whine, always, like an undertone, the beggar-whine; and always the crimson, watching eye of Vesuvius.

Have you seen her—the Ambassador? Ah, *Bellissima Creatura! Una Donna Rara!* She is fairer than the Blessed Virgin; and good! Never was such a soul in such a body! The rôle of her benefactions would stretch from here to Posilipo. And she loves the people, loves to go among them and speak to this one and that, and her apple-blossom face under the big blue hat works miracles like the Holy Images in the Churches.

In her great house with the red marble stairway, Lady Hamilton holds brilliant sway. From her boudoir windows she can see the bay, and on the left, hanging there, a flame in a cresset, the blood-red glare of Vesuvius staring at the clear blue air.

Blood-red on a night of stars, red like a wound, with lava scars. In the round wall-mirrors of her boudoir, is the blackness of the bay, the whiteness of a star, and the bleeding redness of the mountain's core. Nothing more. All night long, in the mirrors, nothing more. Black water, red stain, and above, a star with its silver rain.

Over the people, over the king, trip the little Ambassadorial feet; fleet and light as a pigeon's wing, they brush over the artists, the friars, the *abbés*, the Court. They bear her higher and higher at each step. Up and over the hearts of Naples goes the beautiful Lady Hamilton till she reaches even to the Queen; then rests in a sheening, shimmering altitude, between earth and sky, high and floating as the red crater of Vesuvius. Buoyed up and sustained in a blood-red destiny, all on fire for the world to see.

Proud Lady Hamilton! Superb Lady Hamilton! Quivering, blood-swept, vivid Lady Hamilton! Your vigour is enough to awake the dead, as you tread the newly uncovered courtyards of Pompeii. There

is a murmur all over the opera house when you enter your box. And your frocks! Jesu! What frocks! "India painting on wyte sattin!" And a new camlet shawl, all sea-blue and blood-red, in an intricate pattern, given by Sir William to help you do your marvelous "Attitudes." Incomparable actress! No theatre built is big enough to compass you. It takes a world; and centuries shall elbow each other aside to watch you act your part. Art, Emma, or heart?

The blood-red cone of Vesuvius glows in the night.

She sings "*Luce Bella*," and Naples cries "*Brava! Ancora!*" and claps its hands. She dances the tarantella, and poses before a screen with the red-blue shawl. It is the frescoes of Pompeii unfrozen; it is the fine-cut profiles of Sicilian coins; it is Apollo Belvedere himself — Goethe has said it. She wears a Turkish dress, and her face is sweet and lively as rippled water.

The lava-streams of Vesuvius descend as far as Portici. She climbs the peak of fire at midnight — five miles of flame. A blood-red mountain, seeping tears of blood. She skips over glowing ashes and laughs at the pale, faded moon, wan in the light of the red-hot lava. What a night! Spires and sparks of livid flame shooting into the black sky. Blood-red smears of fire; blood-red gashes, flashing her out against the smouldering mountain. A tossing fountain of blood-red jets, it sets her hair flicking into the air like licking flamelets of a burning aureole. Blood-red is everywhere. She wears it as a halo and diadem. Emma, Emma Hamilton, Ambassadors of Great Britain to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

III

ABOUKIR BAY, EGYPT

North-north-west, and a whole-sail breeze, ruffling up the larkspur-blue sea, breaking the tops of the waves into egg-white foam, showing ripple after ripple of pale jade-green over the shoals of Aboukir Bay. Away to the East rolls in the sluggish water of old Nile. West

and South — hot, yellow land. Ships at anchor. Thirteen ships flying the *tricolore*, and riding at ease in a patch of blue water inside a jade-green hem. What of them? Ah, fine ships! The *Orient*, one hundred and twenty guns, *Franklin*, *Tonnant*, each with eighty. Weighty metal to float on a patch of blue with a green hem. They ride stern to stern, in a long line, pointing the way to Aboukir Bay.

To the North are thunderheads, ballooning silver-white thunderheads rising up out of the horizon. The thunderheads draw steadily up into the blue-blossomed sky. A topgallant breeze pushes them rapidly over the white-specked water. One, two, six, ten, thirteen separate tiered clouds, and the wind sings loud in their shrouds and spars. The royals are furled, but the topgallantsails and topsails are full and straining. Thirteen white thunderheads bearing down on Aboukir Bay.

The Admiral is working the stump of his right arm; do not cross his hawse, I advise you.

"Youngster to the mast-head. What! Going without your glass, and be damned to you! Let me know what you see, immediately."

"The enemy fleet, Sir, at anchor in the bay."

"Bend on the signal to form in line of battle, Sir Ed'ard."

The bright wind straightens the signal pennants until they stand out rigid like boards.

"Captain Hood reports eleven fathoms, Sir, and shall he bear up and sound?"

"Signal Captain Hood to lead, sounding."

"By the mark ten! A quarter less nine! By the deep eight!"

Round to starboard swing the white thunderheads, the water of their bows washing over the green jade hem. An orange sunset steams in the shrouds, and glints upon the muzzles of the cannon in the open ports. The hammocks are down; the guns run out and primed; beside each is a pile of canister and grape; gunners are blowing on their matches;

snatches of life music drift down to the lower decks. In the cockpits, the surgeons are feeling the edges of knives and saws; men think of their wives and swear softly, spitting on their hands.

"Let go that anchor! By God, she hangs!"

Past the *Guerrier* slides the *Goliath*, but the anchor drops and stops her on the inner quarter of the *Conquérant*. The *Zealous* brings up on the bow of the *Guerrier*, the *Orion*, *Theseus*, *Audacious*, are all come to, inside the French ships.

The *Vanguard*, Admiral's pennant flying, is lying outside the *Spartiate*, distant only a pistol shot.

In a pattern like a country dance, each balanced justly by its neighbour, lightly, with no apparent labour, the ships slip into place, and lace a design of white sails and yellow yards on the purple, flowing water. Almighty Providence, what a day! Twenty-three ships in one small bay, and away to the Eastward, the water of old Nile rolling sluggishly between its sand-bars.

Seven hundred and forty guns open fire on the French fleet. The sun sinks into the purple-red water, its low, straight light playing gold on the slaughter. Yellow fire, shot with red, in wheat sheafs from the guns; and a racket and ripping which jerks the nerves, then stuns, until another broadside crashes the ears alive again. The men shine with soot and sweat, and slip in the blood which wets the deck.

The surgeons cut and cut, but men die steadily. It is heady work, this firing into ships not fifty feet distant. Lilac and grey, the heaving bay, slapped and torn by thousands of splashings of shot and spars. Great red stars peer through the smoke, a mast is broke short off at the lashings and falls overboard, with the rising moon flashing in its top-lamper.

There is a rattle of musketry; pipe-clayed, red-coated marines swab, and fire, and swab. A round shot finishes the job, and tears its way out through splintering bulwarks. The roar of broadside after broadside echoes from the shore in a long, hoarse humming. Drums beat in

little fire-cracker snappings, and a boat-swain's whistle wires, thin and sharp, through the din, and breaks short off against the scream of a gun crew, cut to bits by a bursting cannon.

Three times they clear the *Vanguard's* guns of a muck of corpses, but each new crew comes on with a cheer and each discharge is a jeer of derision.

The Admiral is hit. A flying sliver of iron has shivered his head and opened it, the skin lies quivering over his one good eye. He sees red, blood-red, and the roar of the guns sounds like water running over stones. He has to be led below.

Eight bells, and the poop of the *Orient* is on fire. "Higher, men, train your guns a little higher. Don't give them a loophole to scotch the flame. 'Tis their new fine paint they'll have to blame." Yellow and red, waving tiger-lilies, the flames shoot up—round, serrated petals, flung out of the black-and-silver cup of the bay. Each stay is wound with a flickering fringe. The ropes curl up and shrivel as though a twinge of pain withered them. Spasm after spasm convulses the ship. A Clap!—A Crash!—A Boom!—and silence. The ships have ceased firing.

Ten, twenty, forty seconds . . .

Then a dash of water as masts and spars fall from an immense height, and in the room of the floating, licking tiger-lily is a chasm of yellow and red whirling eddies. The guns start firing again.

Foot after foot across the sky goes the moon, with her train of swirling silver-blue stars.

The day is fair. In the clear Egyptian air, the water of Aboukir Bay is as blue as the bottom flowers of a larkspur spray. The shoals are green with a white metal sheen, and between its sand-bars the Nile can be seen, slowly rolling out to sea.

The Admiral's head is bound up, and his eye is bloodshot and very red, but he is sitting at his desk writing, for all that. Through the stern windows is the blue of the sea, and reflections dance waveringly on his paper. This is what he has written:

"VANGUARD. MOUTH OF THE NILE.
August 8th, 1798.

MY DEAR SIR:—

Almighty God has made me the happy instrument in destroying the enemy's fleet; which, I hope, will be a blessing to Europe . . . I hope there will be no difficulty in our getting refitted at Naples

Your most obliged and affectionate
HORATIO NELSON."

Dance, little reflections of blue water,
dance, while there is yet time.

IV NAPLES

"Get out of the way, with your skew-bald ass. Heu! Heu!" There is scant room for the quality to pass up and down the whole Strada di Toledo. Such a running to and fro! Such a clacking, and clapping, and fleering, and cheering. Holy Mother of God, the town has gone mad. Listen to the bells. They will crack the very doors of Heaven with their jangling. The sky seems the hot half-hollow of a clanging bell. I verily believe they will rock the steeples off their foundations. Ding! Dang! Dong! Jingle-jingle! Clank! Clink! Twitter! Tingle! Half Naples is hanging on the ropes, I vow it is louder than when they crown the Pope. The lapis-lazuli pillars in Jesus Church positively lurch with the noise; the carvings of Santa Chiara are at swinging poise. In San Domenico Maggiore, the altar quivers; Santa Maria del Carmine's chimes run like rivers tinkling over stones; the big bell of the Cathedral hammers and drones. It is gay to-day, with all the bells of Naples at play.

That's a fine equipage; those bays shine like satin. Why, it is the British Ambassador, and two British officers with her in the carriage! Where is her hat? Tut, you fool, she doesn't need one, she is wearing a ribbon like a Roman senator. Blue it is, and there are gold letters: "Nelson and Victory." The woman is undoubtedly mad, but it is a madness which kindles. "*Viva Nelson! Viva Miladi!*" Half a hundred hats are flying in the air like kites, and all the white

handkerchiefs in Naples wave from the balconies.

Brava, Emma Hamilton, a fig for the laws of good taste, your heart beats blood, not water. Let pale-livered ladies wave decorously; do you drive the streets and tell the *lazzaroni* the good news. Proud Lady Hamilton! Mad, whole-hearted Lady Hamilton! *Viva! Viva ancora!* Wear your Nelson-anchor earrings for the sun to flash in; cut a dash in your new blue shawl, spotted with these same anchors. What if lily-tongued dandies dip their pens in gall to jeer at you, your blood is alive. The red of it stains a bright band across the pages of history. The others are ghosts, rotting in aged tombs. Light your three thousand lamps, that your windows spark and twinkle "Nelson" for all the world to see, and even the little wavelets of the bay have a largess of gold petals dropped from his name. Rule, Britannia, though she doesn't deserve it; it is all Nelson and the Ambassador, in the streets of Naples.

He has rooms at the Palazzo Sesso, the British Admiral, and all day long he watches the red, half-closed eye of Vesuvius gazing down at his riding ships. At night, there is a red plume over the mountain, and the light of it fills the room with a crimson glow, it might be a gala lit for him. His eyes swim. In the open sky hangs a steel-white star, and a bar of silver cuts through the red reflections of the mirrors. Red and silver, for the bay is not blue at night.

"Oh brave Nelson, oh God bless and protect our brave deliverer, oh, Nelson, Nelson, what do we not owe to you!" Sea-blue, the warp; but the thread of the woof is bolted red. Fiddlers and dinners—Well, or Hell! as the case may be. Queens, populace—these are things, like guns, to face. Rostral Columns and birthday fêtes jar the nerves of a wounded head; it is better in bed, in the rosy gloom of a plume-lit room.

So the Admiral rests in the Palazzo Sesso, the guest of his Ambassador, and his ships ride at anchor under the flaming mountain.

The shuttle shoots, the shuttle weaves.

The red thread to the blue thread cleaves.
The web is plaiting which nothing un-
reaves.

The Admiral buys the Ambassadors a table, a pleasant tribute to hospitality. It is of satin-wood, sprinkled over with little flying loves arrayed in pink and blue sashes. They sit at this table for hours, he and she, discussing the destiny of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and her voice is like water tinkling over stones, and her face is like the same water twinkling in shallows.

She counts his money for him, and laughs at his inability to reduce *carolins* to English sixpences. She drives him out to Caserta to see the Queen, and parades him on the Chiaia to delight the common people. She is always before him, a mist of rose and silver, a damask irradiation, shading and lighting like a palpitant gem.

In the evenings, by the light of two wax candles, the Admiral writes kind acknowledgements to the tributes of half a world. Moslem and Christian sweetly united to stamp out liberty. It is an inspiring sight to see. Rule Britannia indeed, with Slavs and Turks boosting up her footstool. The Sultan has sent a Special Envoy bearing gifts: the *Chelenc* — "Plume of Triumph," all in diamonds, and a pelisse of sables, just as bonds of his eternal gratitude. "*Viya il Tureo!*" says Lady Hamilton. The Mother of His Sultanic Majesty begs that the Admiral's pocket may be the repository of a diamond-studded box to hold his snuff. The Russian Tzar, a bit self-centered as most monarchs are, sends him his portrait, diamond-framed of course. The King of Sardinia glosses over his fewer gems by the richness of his compliments. The East India Company, secure of its trade, has paid him ten thousand pounds. The Turkish Company has given him plate. A grateful country augments his state by creating him the smallest kind of peer, with a couple of tuppences a year, and veneering it over by a grant of arms. Arms for an arm, but what for an eye! Does the Admiral smile as he writes his reply? Writes with his left hand that he is aware of the

high honour it will be to bear this shield: "A chief undulated argent, from which a palm-tree issuant, between a disabled ship on the dexter, and a ruinous battery on the sinister, all proper." "Very proper, indeed," nods Sir William, but Lady Hamilton prods the coloured paper shield a trifle scornfully. "If I was King of England, I would make you Duke Nelson, Marquis Nile, Earl Aboukir, Viscount Pyramid, Baron Crocodile and Prince Victory." "My dear Emma, what a child you are," says Sir William, but the Admiral looks out of the window at the blood-red mountain and says nothing at all.

Something shakes Naples. Shakes so violently that it makes the candles on the Admiral's writing-table flicker. Earthquakes, perhaps. Aye, earthquakes, but not from the red, plumed mountain. The dreadful tread of marching men is rocking the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the *fanfare* of Republican trumpets blows over the city like a great wind. It swirls the dust of Monarchy in front of it, across Naples and out over the Chiaia to the sea.

The Admiral walks his quarter-deck with the blue bay beneath him, but his eyes are red with the glare of Vesuvius, and the blood beats in and out of his heart so rapidly that he is almost stifled. All Naples is red to the Admiral, but the core of crimson is the Palazzo Sesso, in whose windows, at night, the silver stars flash so brightly. "Crimson and silver," thinks the Admiral, "O Emma, Emma Hamilton!"

It is December now, and Naples is heaving and shuddering with the force of the Earth shock. There is no firm ground on which to stand. Beneath the Queen's footsteps is a rocking jelly. Even the water of the bay boils and churns and knocks loudly against the wooden sides of the British ships.

Over the satin-wood table, the Admiral and the Ambassador sit in consultation, and red fire flares between them across its polished surface. "My adorable, unfortunate Queen! Dear,

dear Queen!" Lady Hamilton's eyes are carbuncles burning into the Admiral's soul. He is dazzled, confused, used to the glare on blue water he thinks he sees it now. It is Duty and Kings. Caste versus riff-raff. The roast beef of old England against fried frogs' legs.

Red, blood-red, figures the weaving pattern, red blushing over blue, flushing the fabric purple, like lees of wine.

A blustering night to go to a party. But the coach is ready, and Lord Nelson is arrived from his ship. Official persons cannot give the slip to other official persons, and it is Kelim Effendi who gives the reception, the Sultan's Special Envoy. "Wait," to the coachman; then lights, jewels, sword-clickings, compliments, a promenade round the rooms, bowing, and a quick, unwatched exit from a side door. Someone will wake the snoring coachman hours hence and send him away. But it will not be his Master or Mistress. These hurry through dark, windy streets to the Molesiglio. How the waves flow by in the darkness! "A heavy ground-swell," says the Admiral, but there is a lull in the wind. A pass-word in English—we are all very English tonight. "Can you find your way, Emma?" Sir William is perturbed. But the Ambassadors is gone, gone lightly, swiftly, up the dark mole and disappeared through a postern in the wall. She is aflame, scorching with red and gold fires, a torch of scarlet and ochre, a meteor of sulphur and chrome dashed with vermilion.

There are massacres in the streets of Naples; in the Palace, a cowering Queen. This is melodrama, and Emma is the Princess of Opera Bouffe. Opera Bouffe, with Death as Pulcinello. Ho! Ho! You laugh. A merry fellow, and how if Death had you by the gizzard? Comedy and Tragedy shift masks, but Emma is intent on her task and sees neither. Frightened, vacillating monarchs to guide down a twisting stair; but there is Nelson climbing up. And there are lanterns, cutlasses, pistols, and, at last, the night air, black slapping water, and boats.

They are afloat, off the trembling, quivering soil of Naples, and their way

is lit by a blood-red glimmer from the tossing fires of Vesuvius.

V

PALERMO, ET AL.

Storm-tossed water, and an island set in a sea as blue as the bottom flowers of a spike of larkspur, come upon out of a hurly-burly of wind, and rain, and jagged waves. Through it all has walked the Ambassadors like some starry saint, pouring mercy out of full hands. The Admiral sees her misted with rose and purple, radiating comfort in a phosphoric glow. Is it wise to light one's life with an iridescence? Perhaps not, but the bolt is shot.

The stuff is weaving. Now one thread is uppermost, now another, making striae of reds and blues, or clouding colour over colour.

There are lemon groves, and cool stars, and love flooding beneath them. There are slanting decks, and full sails, and telescopes, wearying to a one-eyed man. Then a span of sunlight under pink oleanders; and evenings beneath painted ceilings, surrounded by the hum of a court.

Naples again, with cannon blazing. A haze of orders, documents, pardons, and a hanging. Palermo, and Dukedoms and "*Nostro Liberatore*." One cannot see everything with one eye. Flight is impossible, but misted vision shows strange shapes. It is Opera Bouffe, with Tragedy in the front row. Downing Street hints reproof, mentions stories of gaming-tables and high piles of gold. What nonsense to talk of a duel! Sir William and the Admiral live like brothers. But they will not be silent, those others. "Poor Lady Nelson, what will she do?" Still it is true that the lady in question is a bit of a shrew.

Blood beats back and forth under the lemon groves, proving itself a right of way. "I worship, nay, adore you, and if you was single, and I found you under a hedge, I would instantly marry you. Santa Emma! As truly as I believe in God, do I believe you are a saint." If

the lady is a saint and he her acolyte, it is by a Divine right. These are the ways of Heaven; the Admiral prays and knows himself forgiven and absolved.

Revolve slowly, shuttle of the blue thread, red is a strong colour under Sicilian skies.

VI

LEGHORN TO LONDON

A Court, an Ambassador, and a great Admiral, in travelling carriages rolling over the map of Europe. Straining up hills, howling along levels, rolling down slopes, and all to the tune of "Hip! Hip! Hurrah!" From Leghorn to Florence, to Ancona, to Trieste, is one long *Festa*. Every steeple sways with clashing bells, and people line the roads, yelling "*Viva Nelson! Hooray! Hooray! Viva Inghilterra!*" Wherever they go, it is a triumphal progress and a pinny-pinny-poppy-show. Whips crack, sparks fly, sails fill—another section of the map is left behind. Carriages again, up hill and down, from the seaboard straight into Austria.

Hip! Hip! Hip! The wheels roll into Vienna. Then what a to-do! Concerts, Operas, Fireworks too. Dinners where one hundred six-foot grenadiers do the waiting at table. Such grandiloquence! Such splendid, regal magnificence! Trumpets and cannons, and Nelson's health; the few wealth of Baron Arnstein, and the excellent wine of his cellars. Haydn conducts an oratorio while the guests are playing *faro*. Delightful city! What a pity one must leave! These are rewards worthy of the Battle of the Nile. You smile. Tut! Tut! Remember they are only foreigners; the true British breed writes home scurvy letters for all London to read, Hip! Hip! God save the King!

For two months, the travelling carriages stand in the stables; but horses are put to them at last, and they are off again. No Court this time; but what is a fleeing Queen to a victorious Admiral! Up hill, down dale, round and round roll the sparkling wheels, kicking up all the big and little stones of Austria. "Huzza for the Victor of Aboukir!"

shouts the populace. The traces tighten, and the carriages are gone. In and out of Prague roll the wheels, and across the border into Germany.

Dresden at last, but an Electress turning her back on Lady Hamilton. A stuffy state, with a fussy etiquette! Why distress oneself for such a rebuff? Emma will get even with them yet. It is enough for her to do her "*Attitudes*," and to perfection. And still—and still—But Lady Hamilton has an iron will.

Proud Lady Hamilton! Blood-betrayed, hot-hearted Lady Hamilton! The wheels roll out of Dresden, and Lady Hamilton looks at the Admiral. "Oh, Nelson, Nelson." But the whips are cracking and one cannot hear.

Roll over Germany, wheels. Roll through Magdeburg, Lodwostz, Anhalt. Roll up to the banks of the Elbe, and deposit your travellers in a boat once more. Along the green shores of the green-and-brown river to Hamburg, where merchants and bankers are waiting to honour the man who has saved their gold. Huzza for Nelson, Saviour of Banks! Where is the frigate a thankful country might have sent him? Not there. Why did he come overland, forsooth? The Lion and the Unicorn are uncouth beasts, but we do not mind in the least. No, indeed! We take a packet and land at Yarmouth.

"Hip! Hip! Hip! God save the King! Long live Nelson, Britain's Pridel!" The common people are beside themselves with joy, there is no alloy to their welcome. Before *The Wrestler's* inn, troops are paraded. And every road is arcaded with flags and flowers. "He is ours! Hip! Hip! Nelson!" Cavalcades of volunteer cavalry march before him. Two days to London, and every road bordered with smiling faces. They cannot go faster than a footpace because the carriage is drawn by men. Muskets pop, and every shop in every town is a flutter of bunting.

Red, Lady Hamilton, red welcome for your Admiral. Red over foggy London. Bow bells peeling, and the crowded streets reeling through fast tears. Years,

Emma, and Naples covered by their ashes

Blood red, his heart flashes to hers, but the great city of London is blurred to both of them

VII MIRROR

Early Autumn, and a light breeze rustling through the trees of Paradise Merton, and passing the ripples of the little Nile against the sides of the arched stone bridge. It is ten o'clock, and through the blowing leaves, the lighted windows of the house twinkle like red, pulsing stars. Far down the road is a jingle of harness, and a crunching of wheels. Out of the darkness flare the lamps of a post chaise, blazing basilisk eyes, making the smooth sides of leaves shine, as they approach, the darkness swallowing in behind them. A rattle, a stamping of hoofs, and the chaise comes to a stand opposite a wooden gate. It is not late, maybe a bit ahead of time. The post boy eases himself in the saddle, and loosens his reins. The light from the red windows glitters in the varnished panels of the chaise.

How tear himself away from so dear a home! Can he wrench himself apart, can he pull his heart out of his body? Her face is pitiful with tears. Two years gone, and only a fortnight returned. His head hums with the rushing of his blood. "Wife in the sight of Heaven"—surely one life between them now, and yet the summons has come. Blue water is calling, the peaked seas beckon.

The Admiral kneels beside his child's bed, and prays. These are the ways of the Almighty. "His will be done." Pathetic trust, thrusting aside desire. The fire on the hearth is faint and glowing, and throws long shadows across the room. How quiet it is, how far from battles and crowning seas.

She strains him in her arms, she whispers, sobbing, "Dearest husband of my heart, you are all the world to Emma." She delays his going by minute and minute. "My Dearest and most Beloved, God protect you and my dear Horatia

and grant us a happy meeting. Amen! Amen!"

Tear, blue shuttle through the unpeeling red, but have a care lest the thread snap in following.

"God bless you, George. Take care of Lady Hamilton." He shakes his brother in law by the hand. The chaise door bangs. The post boy flicks his whip, the horses start forward. Red windows through flecking trees. Blood red windows growing dimmer behind him, until they are only a shimmer in the distance. His eyes smart, searching for their faint glimmer through blowing trees. His eyes smart with tears, and fears which seem to haunt him. All night he dives, through Guildford, over Hindhead, on his way to Portsmouth.

VIII

AT SEA, OFF CAPE TRAFALGAR

Blue as the tip of a deep blue salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea. Up to meet it, in a concave curve of bright colour, rises the water, flat, unrippled, for the wind scarcely stirs. How comes the sky so full of clouds on the horizon, with none over head? Clouds! Great clouds of canvas! Mighty ballooning clouds, bearing thunder and crackled lightning in their folds. They roll up out of the horizon, tiered, stately. Sixty-four great thunder clouds, more perhaps, throwing their shadows over ten miles of sea.

Boats dash back and forth. Their ordered oars sparkling like silver as they lift and fall. Frigate captains receiving instructions, coming aboard the flagship, departing from it. Blue and white, with a silver flashing of boats.

Thirty-three clouds headed South, twenty-three others converging upon them! They move over the water as silently as the drifting air. Lines to lines, drawing nearer on the faint impulse of the breeze.

Blue coated, flashing with stars, the Admiral walks up and down the poop

Stars on his breast, in his eyes the white glare of the sea. The enemy wears, looping end to end, and waits, poised in a half circle like a pale new moon upon the water. The British ships point straight to the hollow between the horns, and even their stunsails are set. Arrows flung at a crescent over smooth blue water.

"Now, Blackwood, I am going to amuse the fleet with a signal. Mr Pasco, I wish to say to the fleet, 'England confides that every man will do his duty.' You must be quick, for I have one more to make, which is for close action."

"If your Lordship will permit me to substitute 'expects' for 'confides,' it will take less time, because 'expects' is in the vocabulary and 'confides' must be spelt."

Flutter flags, fling out your message to the advancing arrows. Ripple and fly over the Admiral's head. Signal flags are of all colours, but the Admiral sees only the red. It beats above him, outlined against the salmon blue sky. A crimson blossom sprung from his heart, the banner royal of his Destiny struck out sharply against the blue of Heaven.

Frigate Captain Blackwood bids goodbye to the Admiral. "I trust, my Lord, that on my return to the *Victory*, I shall find your Lordship well and in possession of twenty prizes." A gash of blood colour cuts across the blue sky, or is it that the Admiral's eyes are tired with the flashing of the sea? "God bless you, Blackwood, I shall never speak to you again." What is it that haunts his mind? He is blinded by red, blood red fading to rose, smeared purple, blotted out by blue Larkspur sea and blue sky above it, with the flickering flags of his signal standing out in cameo.

Boom! A shot passes through the main topgallantsail of the *Victory*. The ship is under fire. Her guns cannot bear while she is head on. Straight at the floating half moon of ships goes the *Victory*, leading her line, muffled in the choking smoke of the *Bucentaure's* guns. The sun is dimmed, but through the smoke cloud prick diamond sparkles from the Admiral's stars as he walks up and down the quarter-deck.

Red glare of guns in the Admiral's eyes. Red stripe of masts drawn up on the poop. Eight are carried off by a single shot, and the red stripe hquefies, and sumps, lapping, down the gangway. Every stunsail boom is shot away. The blue of the sea has vanished, there is only the red of cannon, and the white twinkling sparks of the Admiral's stars.

The bows of the *Victory* cross the wake of the *Bucentaure*, and one after another, as they bear, the double-shotted guns tear through the woodwork of the French ship. The *Victory* slips past like a shooting shuttle, and runs on board the *Redoubtable*, seventy-four, and their spars lock, with a shock which almost stops their headway.

It is a glorious Autumn day outside the puff ball of smoke. A still, blue sea, unuffled, banded to silver by a clear sun.

Guns of the *Victory*, guns of the *Redoubtable*, exploding incessantly, making one long draw of sound. Rattling upon it, ram on a tin roof, the pop-pop of muskets from the mizzen top of the *Redoubtable*. There are sharpshooters in the mizzen top, aiming at the fog below. Suddenly, through it, spears the gleam of diamonds, it is the Admiral's stars, reflecting the flashes of the guns.

Red blood in a flood before his eyes. Red from horizon to zenith, crushing down like beaten metal. The Admiral falls to his knees, to his side, and lies there, and the crimson glare closes over him, a cupped inexorable end. "They have done for me at last, Hardy. My back-bone is shot through."

The blue thread is snapped and the bolt falls from the loom. Weave, shuttle of the red thread. Weave over and under yourself in a scarlet ecstasy. It is all red now he comes to die. Red, with the white sparkles of those cursed stars.

Carry him gently down, and let no man know that it is the Admiral who has fallen. He covers his face and his stars with his handkerchief. The white glitter is quenched, the white glitter of his life will shine no more. "Doctor, I am gone."

I leave Lady Hamilton and my daughter Horatia as a legacy to my Country." Pathetic trust, thrusting aside knowledge. Flint, the men who sit in Parliament, flint which no knocking can spark to fire. But you still believe in men's goodness, knowing only your own heart. "Let my dear Lady Hamilton have my hair, and all other things belonging to me."

The red darkens, and is filled with tossing fires. He sees Vesuvius, and over it the single brilliance of a star.

"One would like to live a little longer, but thank God, I have done my duty."

Slower, slower, passes the red thread and stops. The weaving is done.

In the log-book of the *Victory*, it is written: "Partial firing continued until 4:30, when a victory having been re-

ported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B., he died of his wound."

IX

CALAIS

It is a timber-yard, pungent with the smell of wood: Oak, Pine, and Cedar. But under the piles of white boards, they say there are bones rotting. An old guide to Calais speaks of a wooden maker shaped like a battledore, handle downwards, on the broad part of which was scratched: "Emma Hamilton, England's friend." It was a poor thing and now even that has gone. Let us buy an oak chip for remembrance. It will only cost a sou.

GUNS AS KEYS: AND THE GREAT GATE SWINGS

PART I

Due East, far West. Distant as the nests of the opposite winds. Removed as fire and water are, as the clouds and the roots of the hills, as the wills of youth and age. Let the key-guns be mounted, make a brave show of waging war, and pry off the lid of Pandora's box once more. Get in at any cost, and let out at little, so it seems, but wait—wait—there is much to follow through the Great Gate!

They do not see things in quite that way, on this bright November day, with sun flashing, and waves splashing, up and down Chesapeake Bay. On shore, all the papers are running to press with huge headlines: "Commodore Perry Sails." Dining-tables buzz with travellers' tales of old Japan culled from Dutch writers. But we are not like the Dutch. No shutting the stars and stripes up on an island. Pooh! We must trade wherever we have a mind. Naturally!

The wharves of Norfolk are falling behind, becoming smaller, confused with the warehouses and the treas. On the

impetus of the strong South breeze, the paddle-wheel steam frigate, *Mississippi*, of the United States Navy, sails down the flashing bay. Sails away, and steams away. For her furnaces are burning, and her paddle-wheels turning, and all her sails are set and full. Pull, men, to the old chorus:

"A Yankee ship sails down the river,
Blow, boys, blow;
Her masts and spars they shine like
silver,
Blow, my bully boys, blow."

But what is the use? That plaguy brass band blares out with "The Star Spangled Banner," and you cannot hear the men because of it. Which is a pity, thinks the Commodore, in his cabin, studying the map, and marking stepping-stones: Madeira, Cape Town, Mauritius, Singapore, nice firm stepping-places for seven-league boots. Flag-stones up and down a hemisphere.

My! How she throws the water of from her bows, and how those paddle wheels churn her along at the rate of seven good knots! You are a proud lady Mrs. *Mississippi*, curtseying down Chesa-

peake Bay, all a-flutter with red white and blue ribbons.

At Mishima in the Province of Kai,
Three men are trying to measure a
pine tree

By the length of their outstretched
arms.

Trying to span the bole of a huge
pine tree

By the spread of their lifted arms.
Attempting to compress its girth
Within the limit of their extended
arms.

Beyond, Fuji,
Majestic, inevitable,
Wreathed over by wisps of cloud.
The clouds draw about the moun-
tain,

But there are gaps.
The men reach about the pine tree,
But their hands break apart;
The rough bark escape their hand-
clasps;

The tree is unencircled.
Three men are trying to measure
the stem of a gigantic pine tree,
With their arms,
At Mishima in the Province of Kai.

Furnaces are burning good Cumber-
land coal at the rate of twenty-six tons
per diem, and the paddle-wheels turn
round and round in an iris of spray. She
noses her way through a wallowing sea;
foots it, bit by bit, over the slanting
wave slopes; pants along, thrust forward
by her breathing furnaces, urged ahead
by the wind draft flattening against her
taut sails.

The Commodore, leaning over the
taffrail, sees the peak of Madeira sweep
up out of the haze. The *Mississippi*
glides into smooth water, and anchors
under the lee of the "Desertas."

Ah! the purple bougainvillia! And
the sweet smells of the heliotrope and
geranium hedges! Ox-drawn sledges clat-
tering over cobbles — what a fine pause
in an endless voyaging. Stars and stripes
demanding five hundred tons of coal, ten
thousand gallons of water, resting for a
moment on a round stepping-stone, with

the drying sails slatting about in the
warm wind.

"Get out your accordion, Jim, and give
us the 'Suwannee River' to show those
Dagoes what a tune is. Pipe up with the
chorus, boys. Let her go."

The green water flows past Madeira.
Flows under the paddle-boards, making
them clip and clap. The green water
washes along the sides of the Com-
modore's steam flagship and passes away
to leeward.

"Hitch up your trousers, Black Face,
and do a horn-pipe. It's a fine quiet
night for a double shuffle. Keep her
going, Jim. Louder. That's the ticket.
Gosh, but you can spin, Blackey!"

The road is lilly
Outside the Tiger Gate,
And striped with shadows from a
bow moon

Slowly sinking to the horizon.
The roadway twinkles with the bob-
bing of paper lanterns,
Melon-shaped, round, oblong,
Lighting the steps of those who pass
along it;

And there is a sweet singing of many
semi,

From the cages which an insect-seller
Carries on his back.

Westward of the Canaries, in a wind-
blazing sea. Engineers, there, extinguish
the furnaces; carpenters, quick, your
screwdrivers and mallets, and unship the
paddle-boards. Break out her sails, quar-
termasters, the wind will carry her faster
than she can steam, for the trades have
her now, and are whipping her along in
fine clipper style. Key-guns, your muzzles
shine like basalt above the tumbling
waves. Polished basalt cameoed upon
malachite. Yankee-doodle-dandy! A fine
upstanding ship, clouded with canvas,
slipping along like a trotting filly out of
the Commodore's own stables. White
sails and sailors, blue-coated officers, and
red in a star sparked through the claret
decanter on the Commodore's luncheon
table.

The Commodore is writing to his wife,
to be posted at the next stopping place,

Two years is a long time to be upon the sea.

Nigi-oi of Matsuba-ya
Celebrated *oiran*,
Courtesan of unrivalled beauty,
The great silk mercer, Mitsui,
Counts himself a fortunate man
As he watches her parade in front
of him

In her robes of glazed blue silk
Embroidered with singing nightin-
gales.

He puffs his little silver pipe
And arranges a fold of her dress.
He parts it at the neck
And laughs when the falling plum-
blossoms

Tickle her naked breasts.
The next morning he makes out a
bill

To the Director of the Dutch Fac-
tory at Nagasaki

For three times the amount of the
goods

Forwarded that day in two small
junks

In the care of a trusted clerk.

The North-east trades have smoothed
away into hot, blue doldrums. Paddle-
wheels to the rescue. Thank God, we
live in an age of invention. What air
there is, is dead ahead. The deck is a bed
of cinders, we wear a smoke cloud like
a funeral plume. Funeral—of whom?
Of the little heathens inside the Gate?
Wait! Wait! These monkey-men have
got to trade, Uncle Sam has laid his
plans with care, see those black guns
sizzling there. "It's deuced hot," says a
lieutenant, "I wish I could look in at a
hop in Newport this evening."

The one hundred and sixty streets
in the Sanno quarter
Are honey-gold,
Honey-gold from the gold-foil
screens in the houses,
Honey-gold from the fresh yellow
mats;
The lintels are draped with bright
colours,
And from eaves and poles

Red and white paper lanterns
Glitter and swing.

Through the one hundred and sixty
decorated streets of the Sanno
quarter,

Trails the procession,
With a bright slowness,
To the music of flutes and drums.
Great white sails of cotton
Belly out along the honey-gold
streets.

Sword bearers,

Spear bearers,

Mask bearers,

Grimacing masks of mountain *genii*,

And a white cock on a drum

Above a purple sheet.

Over the flower hats of the peo-
ple,

Shines the sacred palanquin,
"Car of gentle motion,"

Upheld by fifty men,

Stalwart servants of the god,

Bending under the weight of mirror-
black lacquer,

Of pillars and roof-tree

Wrapped in chased and gilded
copper.

Portly silk tassels sway to the march-
ing of feet,

Wreaths of gold and silver flowers
Shoot sudden scintillations at the
gold-foil screens.

The golden phoenix on the roof of
the palanquin

Spreads its wings,

And seems about to take flight

Over the one hundred and sixty
streets

Straight into the white heart

Of the curved blue sky.

Six black oxen,

With white and red trappings,

Draw platforms on which are
musicians, dancers, actors,

Who posture and sing,

Dance and parade,

Up and down the honey-gold streets,

To the sweet playing of flutes,

And the ever-repeating beat of heavy
drums,

To the constant banging of heavily
beaten drums,

To the insistent repeating rhythm of
beautiful great drums.

Across the equator and panting down
to Saint Helena, trailing smoke like a
mourning veil. Jamestown jetty, and all
the officers in the ship making at once for
Longwood. Napoleon! Ah, tales — tales
— with nobody to tell them. A bronze
eagle caged by floating woodwork. A
heart burst with beating on a flat drop-
curtain of sea and sky. Nothing now but
pigs in a sty. Pigs rooting in the Em-
peror's bedroom. God be praised, we
have a plumed smoking ship to take us
away from this desolation.

"Boney was a warrior
Away-i-oh;
Boney was a warrior,
John Francois."

"Oh, shut up, Jack, you make me sick.
Those pigs are like worms eating a corpse.
Bah!"

The ladies,
Wistaria Blossom, Cloth-of-Silk, and
Deep Snow,
With their ten attendants,
Are come to Asakusa
To gaze at peonies.
To admire crimson-carmine peonies,
To stare in admiration at bomb-
shaped, white and sulphur
peonies,
To caress with a soft finger
Single, rose-flat peonies,
Tight, incurved, red-edged peonies,
Spin-wheel circle, amaranth peonies.
To smell the acrid pungence of
peony blooms,
And dream for months afterwards
Of the temple garden at Asakusa,
Where they walked together
Looking at peonies.

'The Gate! The Gate! The far-shining
Gate! Pat your guns and thank your stars
you have not come too late. The Orient's
a sleepy place, as all globe-trotters say.
We'll get there soon enough, my lads,
and carry it away. That's a good enough
song to round the Cape with, and there's
the Table Cloth on Table Mountain and
we've drawn a bead over half the curving
world. Three cheers for Old Glory,
fellows.

A Daimio's procession
Winds between two green hills,
A line of thin, sharp, shining,
pointed spears
Above red coats
And yellow mushiroom hats.
A man leading an ox
Has cast himself upon the ground,
He rubs his forehead in the dust,
While his ox gazes with wide, moon
eyes
At the glittering spears
Majestically parading
Between two green hills.

Down, down, down, to the bottom of
the map; but we must up again, high on
the other side. America, sailing the seas
of a planet to stock the shop counters at
home. Commerce-raiding a nation; pull-
ing apart the curtains of a temple and
calling it trade. Magnificent mission!
Every shop-till in every bye-street will
bless you. Force the shut gate with the
muzzles of your black cannon. Then
wait — wait for fifty years — and see
who has conquered.

But now the *Mississippi* must brave
the Cape, in a crashing of bitter seas.
The wind blows East, the wind blows
West, there is no rest under these clash-
ing clouds. Petrel whirl by like torn
newspapers along a street. Albatrosses
fly close to the mastheads. Dread purrs
over this stormy ocean, and the smell of
the water is the dead, oozing dampness
of tombs.

Tiger rain on the temple bridge of
carved greenstone,
Slanting tiger lines of rain on the
lichened lanterns of the gateway,
On the stone statues of mythical
warriors.
Striped rain making the bells of the
pagoda roofs flutter,
Tiger-footing on the bluish stones
of the court-yard,
Beating, snapping, on the chee-
se-
rounds of open umbrellas,
Licking, tiger-tongued, over the
straw mat which a pilgrim wears
upon his shoulders,
Gnawing, tiger-toothed, into the
paper mask

Which he carries on his back.
Tiger-clawed rain scattering the
peach-blossoms,
Tiger tails of rain lashing furiously
among the cryptomerias.

"Land — O." Mauritius. Stepping-stone four. The coaling ships have arrived, and the shore is a hive of Negroes, and Malays, and Lascars, and Chinese. The clip and clatter of tongues is unceasing. "What awful brutes!" "Obviously, but the fruits they sell are good." "Food, fellows, bully good food." Yankee money for pine-apples, shaddocks, mangoes. "Who were Paul and Virginia?" "Oh, a couple of spoonneys who died here, in a shipwreck, because the lady wouldn't take off her smock." "I say, Fred, that's a shabby way to put it. You've no sentiment." "Maybe. I don't read much myself, and when I do, I prefer United States, something like old Artemus Ward, for instance." "Oh, dry up, and let's get some donkeys and go for a gallop. We've got to begin coaling to-morrow, remember."

The beautiful dresses,
Blue, Green, Mauve, Yellow;
And the beautiful green pointed hats
Like Chinese porcelains!
See, a band of geisha
Is imitating the state procession of
a Corean Ambassador,
Under painted streamers,
On an early afternoon.

The hot sun burns the tar up out of the deck. The paddle-wheels turn, flinging the cupped water over their shoulders. Heat smoulders along the horizon. The shadow of the ship floats off the star-board quarter, floats like a dark cloth upon the sea. The watch is pulling on the topsail halliards:

"O Sally Brown of New York City,
Ay, ay, roll and go."

Like a tired beetle, the *Mississippi* creeps over the flat, glass water, creeps on, breathing heavily. Creeps — creeps — and sighs and settles at Pointe de Galle, Ceylon.

Spice islands speckling the Spanish Main. Fairy tales and stolen readings. Saint John's Eve! Midsummer Madness! Here it is all true. But the smell of the spice-trees is not so nice as the smell of new-mown hay on the Commodore's field at Tarrytown. But what can one say to forests of rose-wood, satin-wood, ebony! To the talipot tree, one leaf of which can cover several people with its single shade. Trade! Trade! Trade in spices for an earlier generation. We dream of lacquers and precious stones. Of spinning telegraph wires across painted fans. Ceylon is an old story, ours will be the glory of more important conquests.

But wait — wait. No one is likely to force the Gate. The smoke of golden Virginia tobacco floats through the blue palms. "You say you killed forty elephants with this rifle!" "Indeed, yes, and a trifling bag, too."

Down the ninety-mile rapids
Of the Heaven Dragon River,
He came,
With his bowmen,
And his spearmen,
Borne in a gilded palanquin,
To pass the Winter in Yedo
By the Shōgun's decree.
To pass the Winter idling in the
Yoshiwara,
While his bowmen and spearmen
Gamble away their rusted weapons
Every evening
At the Hour of the Cock.

Her Britannic Majesty's frigate *Cleopatra* salutes the *Mississippi* as she sails into the harbour of Singapore. Vessels galore choke the wharves. From China, Siam, Malaya; Sumatra, Europe, America. This is the bargain counter of the East. Goods — Goods, dumped ashore to change boats and sail on again. Oaths and cupidity; greasy clothes and greasy dollars wound into turbans. Opium and birds'-nests exchanged for tea, cassia, nankeens; gold thread bartered for Brummagem buttons. Pockets knives told off against teapots. Lots and lots of cheap damaged porcelains, and trains of silken bales awaiting advantageous sales to Yankee merchantmen. The figure-head

of the *Mississippi* should be a beneficent angel. With her guns to persuade, she should lay the foundation of such a market on the shores of Japan. "We will do what we can," writes the Commodore, in his cabin.

Outside the drapery shop of
Taketani Sabai,
Strips of dyed cloth are hanging out
to dry.

Fine Arimitsu cloth,
Fine blue and white cloth,
Falling from a high staging,
Falling like falling water,
Like blue and white unbroken water
Sliding over a high cliff,
Like the Ono Fall on the Kisokaido
Road.

Outside the shop of Taketani Sabai,
They have hung the fine dyed cloth
In strips out to dry.

Romance and heroism; and all to make one dollar two. Through grey fog and fresh blue breezes, through heat, and sleet, and sheeted rain. For centuries men have pursued the will-o'-the-wisp — trade. And they have got — what? All civilization weighed in twopenny scales and fastened with string. A sailing planet packed in a dry-goods box. Knocks, and shocks, and blocks of extended knowledge, contended for and won. Cloves and nutmegs, and science stowed among the grains. Your gains are not in silver, mariners, but in the songs of violins, and the thin voices whispering through printed books.

"It looks like a dinner-plate," thinks the officer of the watch, as the *Mississippi* sails up the muddy river to Canton, with the Dragon's Cave Fort on one side, and the Girl's Shoe Fort on the other.

The Great Gate looms in the distant mist, and the anchored squadron waits and rests, but its coming is as certain as the equinoxes, and the lightning bolts of its guns are ready to tear off centuries like husks of corn.

The Commodore sips bottled water from Saratoga, and makes out a report for the State Department. The men play pitch-and-toss, and the officers poker,

and the betting gives heavy odds against the little monkey-men.

On the floor of the reception room
of the Palace
They have laid a white quilt,
And on the quilt, two red rugs;
And they have set up two screens
of white paper

To hide that which should not be
seen.

At the four corners, they have placed
lanterns,

And now they come.

Six attendants,

Three to sit on either side of the
condemned man,

Walking slowly.

Three to the right,

Three to the left,

And he between them

In his dress of ceremony

With the great wings.

Shadow wings, thrown by the
lantern light,

Trail over the red rugs to the
polished floor,

Trail away unnoticed,

For there is a sharp glitter from a
dagger

Borne past the lanterns on a silver
tray.

"O my Master,

I would borrow your sword,

For it may be a consolation to you

To perish by a sword to which you
are accustomed."

Stone, the face of the condemned
man,

Stone, the face of the executioner,

And yet before this moment

These were master and pupil,

Honoured and according homage,

And this is an act of honourable
devotion.

Each face is passive,

Hewed as out of strong stone,

Cold as a statue above a temple
porch.

Down slips the dress of ceremony to
the girdle.

Plunge the dagger to its hilt.

A trickle of blood runs along the
white flesh

And soaks into the girdle silk.

Slowly across from left to right,
 Slowly, upcutting at the end,
 But the executioner leaps to his feet,
 Poises the sword —
 Did it flash, hover, descend?
 There is a thud, a horrible rolling,
 And the heavy sound of a loosened,
 falling body,
 Then only the throbbing of blood
 Spouting into the red rugs
 For he who was a man is that thing
 Crumpled up on the floor,
 Broken, and crushed into the red
 rugs
 The friend wipes the sword,
 And his face is calm and frozen
 As a stone statue on a Winter night
 Above a temple gateway

PART II

Four vessels giving easily to the low
 running waves and cat-sparw breezes of
 a Summer sea July, 1853, Mid Century,
 but just on the turn Mid Century, with
 the vanishing half fluttering behind on a
 foam-bubbled wake Four war ships
 steering for the Land of Great Peace,
 caparisoned in state, cleaving a jewelled
 ocean to a Dragon Gate Behind it the
 quiet of afternoon Golden light reflect-
 ing from the inner sides of shut portals
 War is an old wives tale, a frail beauti-
 ful embroidery of other ages The pan-
 oply of battle fades Arrows rust in
 arsenals, spears stand useless on their
 butts in vestibules Cannon lie un-
 mounted in castle yards, and rats and
 snakes make nests in them and rear
 their young in unmolested satisfaction

The sun of Mid Summer lies over the
 "Land of Great Peace," and behind the
 shut gate they do not hear the paddle
 wheels of distant vessels unceasingly turn-
 ing and advancing, through the jewelled
 scintillations of the encircling sea

Susquehanna and *Mississippi*, steamers,
 towing *Saratoga* and *Plymouth*, sloops of
 war Moving on in the very eye of the
 wind, with not a snip of canvas upon
 their slim yards Fuji! — a point above
 nothing, for there is a haze Stop gazing,
 that is the bugle to clear decks and shot
 guns We must be prepared, as we run

up the coast straight to the Bay of Yedo
 "I say, fellows, those boats think they
 can catch us, they don't know that this
 is Yankee steam" Bang! The shore guns
 are at work And that smoke ball would
 be a rocket at night, but we cannot see
 the gleam in this sunshine

Black with people are the bluffs of
 Uraga, watching the "fire ships," lipping
 windless up the bay Say all the prayers
 you know, priests of *Shinto* and *Buddha*
 Ah! The great splashing of the wheels
 stops, a chain rattles The anchor drops
 at the Hour of the Ape

A clock on the Commodore's chest of
 drawers strikes five with a silvery tinkle

Boats are coming from all directions
 Beautiful boats of unpainted wood,
 broad of beam, with tapering stems, and
 clean runs Swiftly they come, with shout-
 ing rowers standing to their oars The
 shore glitters with spears and lacquered
 lints Compactly the boats advance, and
 each carries a flag — white black white
 — and the stripes break and blow But
 the towlines are cast loose when the
 rowers would make them fast to the
 "black ships," and those who would
 climb the chains ship back dismayed,
 checked by a show of cutlasses, pistols,
 pikes "*Naru Hodo!*" This is amazing,
 unprecedented! Even the Vice Governor,
 though he boards the *Susquehanna*, can
 not see the Commodore "His High
 Mighty Mysteriousness, Lord of the For-
 bidden Interior," remains in his cabin
 Extraordinary! Horrible!

Rockets rise from the forts, and their
 trails of sparks glitter faintly now, and
 their bombs break in faded colours as
 the sun goes down

Bolt the gate, monkey men, but it is
 late to begin tuning locks so rusty and
 worn

Darkness over rice fields and hills The
 Gold Gate hides in shadow Upon the
 indigo dark water, millions of white jelly
 fish drift, like lotus petals over an inland
 lake The land buzzes with prayer, low,
 dim smoke hanging in air, and every hill
 gashes and glares with shooting fires The
 fire bells are ringing in double time, and

a heavy swinging boom clashes from the great bells of temples. Couriers lash their horses, riding furiously to Yedo; junks and scull-boats arrive hourly at Shinagawa with news; runners, bearing dispatches, pant in government offices. The hollow doors of the Great Gate beat with alarms. The charmed Dragon Country shakes and trembles. Iyeyoshi, twelfth Shōgun of the Tokugawa line, sits in his city. Sits in the midst of one million, two hundred thousand trembling souls, and his mind rolls forward and back like a ball on a circular runway, and finds no goal. Roll, poor distracted mind of a sick man. What can you do but wait, trusting in your Dragon Gate, for how should you know that it is rusted.

But there is a sign over the "black ships." A wedge-shaped tail of blue sparklets, edged with red, trails above them as though a Dragon were pouring violet sulphurous spume from steaming nostrils, and the hulls and rigging are pale, quivering, bright as Taira ghosts on the sea of Nagatō.

Up and down walk sentinels, fore and aft, and at the side gangways. There is a pile of round shot and four stands of grape beside each gun; and carbines, and pistols, and cutlasses, are laid in the boats. Floating arsenals — floating sample-rooms for the wares of a continent; shop-counters, flanked with weapons, adrift among the jelly-fishes.

Eight bells, and the meteor washes away before the wet, white wisps of dawn.

Through the countrysides of the "Land of Great Peace," flowers are blooming. The greenish-white, sterile blossoms of hydrangeas boom faintly, like distant inaudible bombs of colour exploding in the woods. Weigelas prick the pink of their slender trumpets against green backgrounds. The fan-shaped leaves of ladies' slippers rustle under cryptomerias.

Midsummer heat curls about the cinnamon-red tree-holes along the Tokaido. The road ripples and glints with the passing to and fro, and beyond, in the roadstead, the "black ships" swing at their anchors and wait.

All up and down the Eastern shore of the bay is a feverish digging, patting,

plastering. Forts to be built in an hour to resist the barbarians, if, peradventure, they can. Japan turned to, what will it not do! Fishermen and palanquin-bearers, packhorse-leaders and farm-labourers, even women and children, pat and plaster. Disaster batters at the Dragon Gate. Batters at the door of Yedo, where Samurai unpack their armour, and whet and feather their arrows.

Daimios smoke innumerable pipes, and drink unnumbered cups of tea, discussing — discussing — "What is to be done?" The Shōgun is no Emperor. What shall they do if the "hairy devils" take a notion to go to Kiōto! Then indeed would the Tokugawa fall. The prisons are crammed with those who advise opening the Gate. Open the Gate, and let the State scatter like dust to the winds! Absurd! Unthinkable! Suppress the "brocade pictures" of the floating monsters with which book-sellers and picture-shop keepers are delighting and affrighting the populace. Place a ban on speech. Preach, inert Daimios — the Commodore will not go to Nagasaki, and the roar of his guns will drown the clattering fall of your Dragon Doors if you do not open them in time. East and West, and trade shaded by heroism. Hokusai is dead, but his pupils are lampooning your carpet soldiers. Spare the dynasty — parley, procrastinate. Appoint two Princes to receive the Commodore, at once, since he will not wait over long. At Kurihama, for he must not come to Yedo.

Flip — flap — flutter — flags in front of the Conference House. Built over night, it seems, with unpainted peaked summits of roofs gleaming like ricks of grain. Flip — flutter — flap — variously-tinted flags, in a crescent about nine tall standards whose long scarlet pennons brush the ground. Beat — tap — fill and relapse — the wind pushing against taut white cloth screens, belling out the Shōgun's crest of heart-shaped Asarum leaves in the panels, crumpling them to indefinite figures of scarlet spotting white. Flip — ripple — brighten — over serried ranks of soldiers on the beach. Sword-bearers, spear-bearers, archers, lancers, and those who carry heavy, antiquated

matchlocks. The block of them five thousand armed men, drawn up in front of a cracking golden door. But behind their bristling spears, the cracks are hidden.

Braying, blasting blares from two brass bands, approaching in glittering boats over glittering water. One is playing the "Overture" from "William Tell," the other, "The Last Rose of Summer," and the way the notes clash, and shock, and shatter, and dissolve, is wonderful to hear. Queer barbarian music, and the monkey-soldiers stand stock still, listening to its reverberation humming in the folded doors of the Great Gate.

Stuff your ears, monkey-soldiers, screw your faces, shudder up and down your spines. Cannon! Cannon! from one of the "black ships." Thirteen thudding explosions, thirteen red dragon tongues, thirteen clouds of smoke like the breath of the mountain gods. Thirteen hammer strokes shaking the Great Gate, and the seams in the metal widen. Open Sesame, shotless guns; and "The Only, I High, Grand and Mighty, Invisible Mysteriousness, Chief Barbarian" reveals himself, and steps into his barge.

Up, oars, down; drip — sun-spray — rowlock-rattle. To shore! To shore! Set foot upon the sacred soil of the "Land of Great Peace," with its five thousand armed men doing nothing with their spears and matchlocks, because of the genii in the black guns aboard the "black ships."

One hundred marines in a line up the wharf. One hundred sailors, man to man, opposite them. Officers, two deep; and, up the centre — the Procession. Bands together now: "Hail Columbia." Marines in file, sailors after, a staff with the American flag borne by seamen, another with the Commodore's broad pennant. Two boys, dressed for ceremony, carrying the President's letter and credentials in golden boxes. Tall, blue-black negroes on either side of — THE COMMODORE! Walking slowly, gold, blue, steel-glitter, up to the Conference House, walking in state up to an ancient tottering Gate, lately closed securely, but now gaping. Bands, rain your music against this golden barrier, harry the ears of the monkey-

men. The doors are ajar, and the Commodore has entered.

Prince of Idzu — Prince of Iwami — in winged dresses of gold brocade, at the end of a red carpet, under violet, silken hangings, under crests of scarlet heart-shaped Asarum leaves, guardians of a scarlet lacquered box, guardians of golden doors, worn thin and bending.

In silence the blue-black negroes advance and take the golden boxes from the page boys; in silence they open them and unwrap blue velvet coverings. Silently they display the documents to the Prince of Idzu — the Prince of Iwami — motionless, inscrutable — beyond the red carpet.

The vellum crackles as it is unfolded, and the long silk-gold cords of the seals drop their gold tassels to straight glistening inches and swing slowly — gold tassels clock-ticking before a doomed, burnished gate.

The negroes lay the vellum documents upon the scarlet lacquered box; bow, and retire.

"I am desirous that our two countries should trade with each other." Careful letters, carefully traced on rich parchment, and the low sun casts the shadow of the Gate far inland over high hills.

"The letter of the President of the United States will be delivered to the Emperor. Therefore you can now go."

The Commodore, rising: "I will return for the answer during the coming Spring."

But ships are frail, and seas are fickle, one can nail fresh plating over the thin gate before Spring. Prince of Idzu — Prince of Iwami — inscrutable statesmen, insensate idiots, trusting blithely to a lock when the key-guns are trained even now upon it.

Withdraw, Procession. Dip oars back to the "black ships." Slip cables and depart, for day after day will lapse and nothing can retard a coming Spring.

Panic Winter throughout the "Land of Great Peace." Panic, and haste, wasting energies and accomplishing nothing. Kiôto has heard, and prays, trembling

Priests at the shrine of Isé whine long, slow supplications from dawn to dawn, and through days dropping down again from morning. Iyáyoshi is dead, and Iyásada rules in Yedo; thirteenth Shōgun of the Tokugawa. Rules and struggles, rescinds laws, urges reforms; breathless, agitated endeavours to patch and polish where is only corroding and puffed particles of dust.

It is Winter still in the Bay of Yedo, though the plum-trees of Kamata and Kinagawa are white and fluttering.

Winter, with green, high, angular seas. But over the water, far toward China, are burning the furnaces of three great steamers, and four sailing vessels heel over, with decks slanted and sails full and pulling.

"There's a bit of a lop, this morning. Mr. Jones, you'd better take in those royals."

"Ay, ay, Sir. Tumble up here, men! Tumble up! Lay aloft and stow royals. Haul out to leeward."

"To my,

Ay,

And we'll furl

Ay,

And pay Paddy Doyle for his Boots."

"Taut band—knot away."

Chug! Chug! go the wheels of the consorts, salting smoke-stacks with whirled spray.

The Commodore lights a cigar, and paces up and down the quarter-deck of the *Powhatan*. "I wonder what the old yellow devils will do," he muses.

Forty feet high, the camellia trees, with hard, green buds unburst. It is early yet for camellias, and the green buds and the glazed green leaves toss frantically in a blustering March wind. Sheltered behind the forty feet high camellia trees, on the hills of Idzu, stand watchmen straining their eyes over a broken dazzle of sea.

Just at the edge of moonlight and sunlight—moon setting; sun rising—they come. Seven war ships heeled over and flinging, dashing through heaped waves, sleeping a moment in hollows, leaping

over ridges, sweeping forward in a strain of canvas and a train of red-black smoke.

"The fire-ships! The fire-ships!"

Slip the bridles of your horses, messengers, and clatter down the Tokaido; scatter pedestrians, palanquins, slow moving cattle, right and left into the cryptomerias; rattle over bridges, spatter dust into shop-windows. To Yedo! To Yedo! For Spring is here, and the fire-ships have come!

Seven vessels, flying the stars and stripes, three more shortly to join them, with ripe, fruit-bearing guns pointed inland.

Princes evince doubt, distrust. Learning must beat learning. Appoint a Professor of the University. Delay, prevaricate. How long can the play continue? Hayashi, learned scholar of Confucius and Mencius—he shall confer with the barbarians at Uraga. Shall he! Word comes that the Mighty Chief of Ships will not go to Uraga. Steam is up, and—Horror! Consternation! The squadron moves toward Yedo! Sailors, midshipmen, lieutenants, pack yards and cross-trees, seeing temple gates, castle towers, flowered pagodas, and look-outs looming distantly clear, and the Commodore on deck can hear the slow booming of the bells from the temples of Shiba and Asakusa.

You must capitulate, great Princes of a quivering gate. Say Yokohama, and the Commodore will agree, for they must not come to Yedo.

Rows of japonicas in full bloom outside the Conference House. Flags, and streamers, and musicians, and pikemen. Five hundred officers, seamen, marines, and the Commodore following in his white-painted gig. A jig of fortune indeed, with a sailor and a professor manoeuvring for terms, chess-playing each other in a game of future centuries.

The Americans bring presents. Presents now, to be bought hereafter. Good will, to head long bills of imports. Occidental mechanisms to push the Orient into limbo. Fox-moves of interpreters, and Pandora's box with a contents rated far too low.

Round and round goes the little train on its circular railroad, at twenty miles an hour, with grave dignitaries seated on its roof. Smiles, gestures, at messages running over wire, a mile away. Touch the harrows, the ploughs, the flails, and shudder at the "spirit pictures" of the daguerreotype machine. These Barbarians have harnessed gods and dragons. They build boats which will not sink, and tinker little gold wheels till they follow the swinging of the sun.

Run to the Conference House. See, feel, listen. And shrug deprecating shoulders at the glisten of silk and lacquer given in return. What are cups cut out of conch-shells, and red-dyed figured crêpe, to railroads, and burning engines!

Go on board the "black ships" and drink mint juleps and brandy smashes, and click your tongues over sweet puddings. Offer the strangers pickled plums, sugared fruits, candied walnuts. Bruit the news far inland through the mouths of countrymen. Who thinks of the Great Gate! Its portals are pushed so far back that the shining edges of them can scarcely be observed. The Commodore has never swerved a moment from his purpose, and the dragon mouths of his guns have conquered without the need of a single powder-horn.

The Commodore writes in his cabin. Writes an account of what he has done.

The sands of centuries run fast, one slides, and another, each falling into a smother of dust.

A locomotive in pay for a Whistler; telegraph wires buying a revolution; weights and measures and Audubon's birds in exchange for fear. Yellow monkey-men leaping out of Pandora's box, shaking the rocks of the Western coastline. Golden California bartering panic for prints. The dressing-gowns of a continent won at the cost of security. Artists and philosophers lost in the hour-glass sand pouring through an open Gate.

Ten ships sailing for China on a fair May wind. Ten ships sailing from one world into another, but never again into the one they left. Two years and a tipturn is accomplished. Over the globe

and back, Rip Van Winkle ships. Slip into your docks in Newport, in Norfolk, in Charlestown. You have blown off the locks of the East, and what is coming will come.

POSTLUDE

In the Castle moat, lotus flowers are blooming,
They shine with the light of an early moon
Brightening above the Castle towers.
They shine in the dark circles of their unreflecting leaves.
Pale blossoms,
Pale towers,
Pale moon,
Deserted ancient moat
About an ancient stronghold,
Your bowmen are departed,
Your strong walls are silent,
Their only echo
A croaking of frogs.
Frogs croaking at the moon
~~In the ancient moat~~
Of an ancient, crumbling Castle.

1903. JAPAN

The high cliffs of the Kagon waterfall, and a young man carving words on the trunk of a tree. He finishes, pauses an instant, and then leaps into the foam-cloud rising from below. But, on the tree-trunk, the newly-cut words blaze white and hard as though set with diamonds:

"How mightily and steadily go Heaven and Earth! How infinite the duration of Past and Present! Try to measure this vastness with five feet. A word explains the Truth of the whole Universe—*unknowable*. To cure my agony I have decided to die. Now, as I stand on the crest of this rock, no uneasiness is left in me. For the first time I know that extreme pessimism and extreme optimism are one."

1903. AMERICA

"Nocturne—Blue and Silver—
Battersea Bridge.

Nocturne—Grey and Silver—
Chelsea Embankment.

Variations in Violet and Green."

Pictures in a glass-roofed gallery, and
all day long the throng of people is so

great that one can scarcely see them.
Debits—credits? Flux and flow through
a wide gateway. Occident—Orient—
after fifty years.

HEDGE ISLAND

A RETROSPECT AND A PROPHECY

Hedges of England, peppered with
sloes; hedges of England, rows and rows
of thorn and brier raying out from the
fire where London burns with its steam-
ing lights, throwing a glare on the sky o'
nights. Hedges of England, road after
road, lane after lane, and on again to the
sea at the North, to the sea at the East,
blackberry hedges, and man and beast
plod and trot and gallop between hedges
of England, clipped and clean; beech,
and laurel, and hornbeam, and yew,
wheels whirl under, and circle through,
tunnels of green to the sea at the South;
wind-blown hedges to mark the mouth
of Thames or Humber, the Western rim.
Star-point hedges, smooth and trim.

Star-point indeed, with all His Majes-
ty's mails agog every night for the
provinces. Twenty-seven fine crimson
coaches drawn up in double file in Lom-
bard Street. Great gold-starred coaches,
blazing with royal insignia, waiting in
line at the Post-Office. Eight of a Sum-
mer's evening, and the sun only just gone
down. "Lincoln," "Winchester," "Ports-
mouth," shouted from the Post-Office
steps; and the Portsmouth chestnuts
come up to the collar with a jolt, and
stop again, dancing, as the bags are
hoisted up. "Gloucester," "Oxford,"
"Bristol," "York," "Norwich." Rein in
those bays of the Norwich team, they shy
badly at the fan-gleam of the lamp over
the Post-Office door. "All in. No more."
The stones of St. Martin's-le-Grand
sparkle under the slap of iron shoes. Off
you go, bays, and the greys of the Dover
mail start forward, twitching, hitching,
champing, stamping, their little feet pat
the ground in patterns and their bits

fleck foam. "Whoa! Steady!" With a
rush they are gone. But Glasgow is ready
with a team of piebalds and sorrels,
driven chess-board fashion. Bang down,
lids of mail-boxes—thunder-lids, mak-
ing the horses start. They part and pull,
push each other sideways, sprawl on the
slippery pavement, and gather wave-like
and crashing to a leap. Spicey tits thosel
Tootle-too! A nice calculation for the
gate, not a minute to spare, with the
wheelers well up in the bit and the lead-
ers carrying bar. Forty-two hours to
Scotland, and we have a coachman who
keeps his horses like clock-work. Whips
flick, buckles click, and wheels turn
faster and faster till the spokes blur.
"Sound your horn, Walter." Make it
echo back and forth from the fronts of
houses. Good-night, London, we are
carrying the mails to the North. Big,
burning light which is London, we dip
over Highgate hill and leave you. The
air is steady, the night is bright, the
roads are firm. The wheels hum like a
gigantic spinning-jenny. Up North, where
the hedges bloom with roses. Through
Whetstone Gate to Alconbury Hill. Stop
at the *Wheatshaf* one minute for the
change. They always have an eye open
here, it takes thirty seconds to drink a
pot of beer, even the post-boys sleep in
their spurs. The wheels purr over the
gravel. "Give the off-hand leader a cut
on the cheek!" Whip! Whew! This is
the first night of three. Three nights to
Glasgow; hedges—hedges—shoot and
flow. Eleven miles an hour, and the
hedges are showered with glow-worms.
The hedges and the glow-worms are very
still, but we make a prodigious clatter.
What does it matter? It is good for these
yokels to be waked up. Tootle-too! The
diamond-paned lattice of a cottage flies

open Post office here Throw them on their haunches Bag up—bag down—and the village has grown indistinct behind The old moon is racing us, she slices through trees like a knife through cheese Distant clocks strike midnight The coach rocks—this is a galloping stage We have a roan near wheel and a grey off wheel and our leaders are chestnuts, 'quick as light, clever as cats'

The sickle frame of our lamps cuts past sequences of trees and well plashed quick set hedges—hedges of England, long shafts of the nimbus of London Hurdles here and there Park palings Reflections in windows On—on—through the night to the North Over stretched roads, with a soft, continuous motion like slipping water Nights and days unwinding down long roads

In the green dawn, spires and bell towers start up and stare at us Hoary old woods nod and beckon A castle turret glitters through trees There is a perfume of wild rose and honeybine, twining in the hedges—Northerly hedges, sliding away behind us The pole chains tinkle tunes and play a sara band with sheep bells beyond the hedges Wedges of fields—square, flat, slatted green with corn, purple with cabbages The stable clocks of Gayhurst and Tyningham chime from either side of the road The Ouse twinkles blue among smooth meadows Go! Go! News of the World! Perhaps a victory! the 'Nile' or 'Salamanca'! Perhaps a proclamation, or a fall in the rate of consols Whatever it is, the hedges of England hear it first Hear it, and flick and flutter their leaves, and catch the dust of it on their shining backs Bear it over the dumpling hills and the humpbacked bridges Start it down the rivers Eden, Eshe, Sark, Milk, Driff, and Clyde Shout it to the sculptured corbels of old churches Lurch round corners with it, and stop with a snap before the claret coloured brick front of the Bell at Derby, and call it to the ostler as he runs out with fresh horses The twenty Corinthian columns of pale primrose alabaster at Keddleston Hall tremble with its importance Even the runaway couples bound for Gretna Green cheer and wave Laurels, and ribbons, and

a red flag on our roof "Wellesley for ever!"

Dust dims the hedges A light travelling chariot running sixteen miles an hour with four blood mares doing their bravest Whip, bound, and cut again Loose rein, quick spur He stands up in the chariot and shakes a bag full of broad gumeas, you can hear them—clinking, clinking—even above the roar of wheels "Go it! Go it! We are getting away from them fifty gumeas to each of you if we get there in time Quietly wait, grey hedges, it will all happen again quick whip, spur, stram Two purple faced gentlemen in another chariot, black geldings smoking hot, blood and froth flipped over the hedges They hail the coach 'How far ahead? Can we catch them?' 'Ten minutes gone by Not more' The post boys wale their lunging horses Rattle, reel, and plunge

But the runaways have Jack Ainslee from the *Bush*, Carlisle He rides in a yellow jacket, and he knows every bylane and wood between here and the border In an hour he will have them at Gretna, and to night the lady will write to her family at Doncaster, and the down mail will carry the letter, with tenpence half penny to pay for news that nobody wishes to hear

"Buy a pottle of plums, Good Sir" 'Cherries, fine, ripe cherries O' Get your plums and cherries, and hurry into the *White Horse Cellar* for a last rum and milk You are a poet, bound to Dover over Westminster Bridge Ah, well, all the same You are an Essex farmer, grown fat by selling your peas at Covent Garden Market at four gumeas a pint Certainly, as you please You are a prebend of Exeter or Wells, timing your journey to the Cathedral Close if you choose You are a Cornish Buck going to Brighton by the *Age* which runs "with a fury" Mercury on a box seat

Get up, beaters, and top boots Shoot the last parcel in Now—"Let 'em go I have 'em" That was a jerk, but the coachman lets fly his whip and quirk his off wheeler on the thigh Out and

under the archway of the coach-yard, with the guard playing "Sally in our Alley" on his key-bugle. White with sun, the streets of London. Cloud-shadows run ahead of us along the streets. Morning. Summer. England. "Have a light, Sir? Tobacco tastes well in this fresh air."

Hedges of England, how many wheels spatter you in a day? How many coaches roll between you on their star-point way? What rainbow colours slide past you with the fluency of water? Crimson mails rumble and glide the night through, but the Cambridge *Telegraph* is a brilliant blue. The *Bull and Mouth* coaches are buttercup yellow, those of the *Bull* are painted red, while the *Bell and Crown* sports a dark maroon with light red wheels. They whirl in a flurry of dust and colours. Soon all this will drop asunder like the broken glass of a kaleidoscope. Hedges, you will see other pictures. New colours will flow beside you. New shapes will intersect you. Tut! Tut! Have you not hawthorn blossoms and the hips and haws of roses?

Trundle between your sharp-shorn hedges, old *Tally-hoes*, and *Comets*, and *Regents*. Stop at the *George*, and turn with a flourish into the yard, where a strapper is washing a mud-splashed chaise, and the horsekeeper is putting a "point" on that best whip of yours. "Coach stops here half an hour, Gentlemen: dinner quite ready." A long oak corridor. Then a burst of sunshine through leaded windows, spangling a floor, iris-tinting rounds of beef, and flaked veal pies, and rose-marbled hams, and great succulent cheeses. Wine-glasses take it and break it, and it quivers away over the tablecloth in faint rainbows; or, straight and sudden, stamps a startling silver whorl on the polished side of a teapot of hot bolica. A tortoise-shell cat naps between red geraniums, and myrtle sprigs tap the stuccoed wall, gently blowing to and fro.

Ah, hedges of England, have you led to this? Do you always conduct to galleried inns, snug bars, beds hung with flowered chintz, sheets smelling of lavender?

What of the target practice off Spit-head? What of the rocking seventy-fours, flocking like gulls about the harbour entrances? Hedges of England, can they root you in the sea?

Your leaves rustle to the quick breeze of wheels incessantly turning. This island might be a treadmill kept floating right side up by galloping hoofs.

Gabled roofs of *Green Dragons*, and *Catherine Wheels*, and *Crowns*, ivy-covered walls, cool cellars holding bins and bins of old port, and claret, and burgundy. You cannot hear the din of passing chaises, underground, there is only the sound of beer running into a jug as the landlord turns the spigot of a barrel. Green sponge of England, your heart is red with wine. "Fine spirits and brandies." Ha! Ha! Good old England, drinking, blinking, dreading new ideas. Queer, bluff, burly England. You have Nelsons, and Wellesleys, and Tom Cribbs, but you have also Wordsworths and Romneys, and (a whisper in your ear) Arkwrights and Stevensons.

"Time's up, Gentlemen; take your places, please!" The horn rings out, the bars rattle, the horses sidle and paw and swing; swish—clip—with the long whip, and away to the hedges again. The high, bordering hedges, leading to Salisbury, and Bath, and Exeter.

Christmas weather with a hard frost. Hips and haws sparkle in the hedges, garnets and carnelians scattered on green baize. The edges of the coachman's hat are notched with icicles. The horses slip on the frozen roads. Loads are heavy at this time of year, with rabbits and pheasants tied under the coach, but it is all hearty Christmas cheer, rushing between the hedges to get there in time for the plum-pudding. Old England forever! And coach-horns, and waits, and Cathedral organs hail the Star of Bethlehem.

But our star, our London, gutters with fog. The Thames rolls like smoke under charcoal. The dome of St. Paul's is gone, so is the spire of St. Martin's-in-

open. Post-office here. Throw them on their haunches. Bag up—bag down—and the village has grown indistinct behind. The old moon is racing us, she slices through trees like a knife through cheese. Distant clocks strike midnight. The coach rocks—this is a galloping stage. We have a roan near-wheel and a grey off-wheel and our leaders are chestnuts, "quick as light, clever as cats."

The sickle-flame of our lamps cuts past sequences of trees and well-plashed quick-set hedges—hedges of England, long shafts of the nimbus of London. Hurdles here and there. Park palings. Reflections in windows. On—on—through the night to the North. Over stretched roads, with a soft, continuous motion like slipping water. Nights and days unwinding down long roads.

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the-Fields, only the fires of torches are brisk and tossing. Tossing torches; tossing heads of horses. Eight mails following each other out of London by torchlight. Scarcely can we see the red flare of the horn lantern in the hand of the ostler at the *Peacock*, but his voice blocks squarely into the fog: "*York Highflyer*," "*Leeds Union*," "*Stamford Regent*." Coach lamps stream and stare, and key-bugles play fugues with each other; "Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" and "The Flaxen Headed Plough-boy" canon and catch as the mails take the road. There will be no "springing" the horses over the "hospital ground" on a day like this; we cannot make more than three miles an hour in such a fog. Hedges of England, you are only ledges from which water drips back to the sea. The rain is so heavy the coach sways. There will be floods farther on. Floods over the river Mole, with apples, and trees, and hurdles floating. Have a care with your leaders there, they have lost the road, and the wheelers have toppled into a ditch of swirling, curling water. The wheelers flounder and squeal and drown, but the coach is hung up on the stump of a willow-tree, and the passengers have only a broken leg or two among them.

Double thong your team, Coachman, that creaking gibbet on the top of Hindhead is an awesome sight at the fall of night, with the wind roaring and squeaking over the heather. The murder, they say, was done at this spot. Give it to them on the flank, good and hot. "Lord, I wish I had a nip of cherry-brandy." "What was that; down in the bowl!" "Drop my arm, Damn you! or you will roll the coach over!" Teeth chatter, bony castanets — click — click — to a ghastly tune, click — click — on the gallows-tree, where it blows so windily. Blows the caged bones all about, one or two of them have dropped out. The up coach will see them lying on the ground like snow-flakes tomorrow. But we shall be floundering in a drift, and shifting the mailbags to one of the horses so that the guard can carry them on.

Hedges of England, smothered in snow. Hedges of England, row after row, flat

and obliterate down to the sea; but the chains are choked on the gallows-tree. Round about England the toothed waves snarl, gnarling her cliffs of chalk and marl. Crabbed England, consuming beef and puddings, and pouring down magnums of port, to cheat the elements. Go it, England, you will beat Bonaparte yet. What have you to do with ideas! You have Bishops, and Squires, and Manor-houses, and — rum.

London shakes with bells. Loud, bright bells lashing over roofs and steeples, exploding in the sunlight with the brilliance of rockets. Every clock-tower drips a tune. The people are merry-making, for this is the King's Birthday and the mails parade this afternoon.

"Messrs. Vidler and Parrat request the pleasure of Mr. Chaplin's company on Thursday the twenty-eighth of May, to a cold collation at three o'clock and to see the Procession of the Mails."

What a magnificent spectacle! A coil of coaches progressing round and round Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sun-mottled harness, gold and scarlet guards, horns throwing off sprays of light and music. Liverpool, Manchester — blacks and greys; Bristol, Devonport — satin bays; Holyhead — chestnuts; Halifax — roans, blue-speckled, rose-speckled . . . On their box-seat thrones sit the mighty coachmen, twisting their horses this way and that with a turn of the wrist. These are the spokes of a wheeling sun, these are the rays of London's aureole. This is her star-fire, reduced by a prism to separate sparks. Cheer, good people! Chuck up your hats, and buy violets to pin in your coats. You shall see it all tonight, when the King's arms shine in lamps from every housefront, and the mails, done parading, crack their whips and depart. England forever! Hurrah!

England forever — going to the Prize Fight on Copthorne Common. England forever, with a blue coat and scarlet lining hanging over the back of the tilbury. England driving a gig and one horse; England set up with a curricie and two. England in donkey-carts and coaches.

England swearing, pushing, drinking, happy, off to see the "Game Chicken" punch the "Nonpareil's" face to a black-and-blue jelly. Good old England, drunk as a lord, cursing the turn-pike men. Your hedges will be a nest of broken bottles before night, and clouds of dust will quench the perfume of your flowers. I bet you three bulls to a tanner you can't smell a rose for a week.

They've got the soldiers out farther along. "Damn the soldiers! Drive through them, Watson." A fine, manly business; are we slaves? "Britons never — never —" Waves lap the shores of England, waves like watchdogs growling; and long hedges bind her like a bundle. Sit safe, England, trussed and knotted; while your strings hold, all will be well.

But in the distance there is a puff of steam. Just a puff, but it will do. Post-boys, coachmen, guards, chaises, melt like meadow rime before the sun.

You spun your webs over England, hedge to hedge. You kept England bound together by your spinning wheels. But it is gone. They have driven a wedge of iron into your heart. They have dried up the sea, and made pathways in the swimming air. They have tapped the barrels in your cellars and your throats are parched and bleeding. But still the hedges blow for the Spring, and dusty soldiers smell your roses as they tramp to Aldershot or Dorchester.

England forever! Star-pointed and shining. Flinging her hedges out and asunder to embrace the world.

THE BRONZE HORSES

Elements

Earth, Air, Water, and Fire! Earth beneath, Air encompassing, Water within its boundaries. But Fire is nothing, comes from nothing, goes nowhere. Fire leaps forth and dies, yet is everything sprung out of Fire.

The flame grows and drops away, and where it stood is vapour, and where was the vapour is swift revolution, and where was the revolution is spinning resistance, and where the resistance endured is crystallization. Fire melts, and the absence of Fire cools and freezes. So are metals fused in twisted flames and take on a form other than that they have known, and this new form shall be to them re-birth and making. For in it they will stand upon the Earth, and in it they will defy the Air, and in it they will suffer the Water.

But Fire, coming again, the substance changes and is transformed. Therefore are things known only between burning and burning. The quickly consumed more swiftly vanish, yet all must feel the heat of the flame which waits in obscurity, knowing its own time and what work it has to do.

ROME

The blue sky of Italy; the blue sky of Rome. Sunlight pouring white and clear from the wide-stretched sky. Sunlight sliding softly over white marble, lying in jasmine circles before cool porticoes, striking sharply upon roofs and domes, recoiling before straight façades of grey granite, foiled and beaten by the deep halls of temples.

Sunlight on tiles and tufa, sunlight on basalt and porphyry. The sky stripes Rome with sun and shadow; strips of yellow, strips of blue, pepper-dots of purple and orange. It whip-lashes the four great horses of gilded bronze, harnessed to the bronze *quadriga* on the Arch of Nero, and they trot slowly forward without moving. The horses tread the marbles of Rome beneath their feet. Their golden flanks quiver in the sunlight. One foot paws in the air. A step, and they will lance into the air, Pegasus-like, stepping the wind. But they do not take the step. They wait — poised, treading Rome as they trod Alexandria, as they trod the narrow Island of Cos. The spokes of the *quadriga* wheels flash, but they do not turn. They burn like day-stars above the

Arch of Nero The horses poise over Rome, a constellation of morning, triumphant above Emperors, proud, indifferent, enduring, relentlessly spurning the hot dust of Rome Hot dust clouds up about them, but not one particle sticks to their gilded manes Dust is nothing, a mere smoke of disappearing hours Slowly they trot forward without moving, and time passes and passes them, brushing along their sides like wind

People go and come in the streets of Rome, shuffling over the basalt paving stones in their high latched sandals White and purple, like the white sun and the purple shadows, the senators pass, followed by a crowd of slaves Waves of brown coated populace efface themselves before a litter, earned by eight Cappadocians in light red tunics, as it moves along, there is the flicker of a violet *stola* and the blowing edge of a *palla* of sky white blue A lady, going to the bath to lie for an hour in the crimson and wine red reflections of a marble chamber, to glide over a floor of green and white stones into a Carraran basin, where the green and blue water will cover her rose and blue veined flesh with a slipping veil Aqua Claudia, Aqua Virgo, Aqua Marcia, drawn from the hills to lie against a woman's body Her breasts round hollows for themselves in the sky green water, her fingers sift the pale water and drop it from her as a lark drops notes backwards into the sky The lady lies against the lipping water, supine and indolent, a pomegranate, a passion flower, a silver flamed lily, lapped, slapped, lulled, by the nipples which stir under her faintly moving hands

Later, beneath a painting of twelve dancing girls upon a gold ground, the slaves will anoint her with cassia, or nakte, or spikenard, or balsam, and she will go home in the swaying litter to eat the tongues of red flamingoes, and drink honey wine flavoured with far smelling mint

Legionaries ravish Egypt for her entertainment, they bring her roses from Alexandria at a cost of thirty thousand pounds Yet she would rather be at Banae, one is so restricted in one's pleasures in Rome! The games are not until

next week, and her favourite gladiator, Naxos, is in training just now, therefore time drags The lady lags over her quail and peacocks' eggs How dull it is White, and blue, and stupid Rome!

Smoke flutters and veers from the top of the Temple of Vesta Altar smoke winding up to the gilded horses as they tread above Rome Below — laughing, jangling, pushing and rushing Two carts are jammed at a street corner, and the oaths of the drivers mingle, and snap, and corrode, like hot fused metal, one against another They hiss and sputter, making a confused chord through which the squeal of a demick winding up a granite slab pierces, shrill and nervous, a sharp boring sound, shoring through the wide, white light of the Roman sky People are selling things matches, broken glass, peas, sausages, cakes A string of donkeys, with panniers loaded with red asparagus and pale green rue, minces past the demick, the donkeys squeeze one by one, with little patting feet, between the demick and the choked crossing "Hey! Gallus, have you heard that Caesar has paid a million *sesterti* for a Mithrine vase It is green and white, flaked like a Spring onion, and has the head of Minerva cut in it, sharp as a signet" "And who has a better right indeed, now that Titus has conquered Judea He will be here next week, they say, and then we shall have a triumph worth looking at" "Famous indeed! We need something It's been abominably monotonous lately Why, there was not enough blood spilled in the games last week to give one the least appetite I'm damned stale, for one"

Still, over Rome, the white sun sails the blue, stretching sky, casting orange and purple striae down upon the marble city, cool and majestic, between cool hills, white and omnipotent, dying of languor, amusing herself for a moment with the little boats floating up the Tiber bringing the good grain of Carthage, then relieved and falling as water falls, dropping into the bath Weak as water, without contour as water, colourless as water, Rome bathes, and relaxes, and melts Flood and fluctuating, a liquid city pouring its

self back into the streams of the earth. And above, on the Arch of Nero, hard, metallic, firm, cold, and permanent, the bronze horses trot slowly, not moving, and the moon casts the fine-edged shadow of them down upon the paving-stones.

Hills of the city: Pincian, Esquiline, Caelian, Aventine, the crimson tip of the sun burns against you, and you start into sudden clearness and glow red, red-gold, saffron, gradually diminishing to an outline of blue. The sun mounts over Rome, and the Arch of Augustus glitters like a cleft pomegranate; the Temples of Julius Cæsar, Castor, and Saturn, turn carbuncle, and rose, and diamond. Columns divide into double edges of flash and shadow; domes glare, inverted beryls hanging over arrested scintillations. The fountains flake and fringe with the scatter of the sun. The mosaic floors of *atriums* are no longer stone, but variegated fire; higher, on the walls, the pictures painted in the white earth of Melos, the red earth of Sinope, the yellow ochre of Attica, erupt into flame. The legs of satyrs jerk with desire, the dancers whirl in torch-bright involutions. Grapes split and burst, spurting spots and sparks of sun.

It is morning in Rome, and the bronze horses on the Arch of Nero trot quietly forward without moving, but no one can see them, they are only a dazzle, a shock of stronger light against the white-blue sky.

Morning in Rome; and the whole city foams out to meet it, seething, simmering, surging, seeping. All between the Janiculum and the Palatine is undulating with people. Scarlet, violet, and purple togas pattern the mass of black and brown. Murex-dyed silk dresses flow beside raw woolen fabrics. The altars smoke incense, the bridges shake under the caking mass of sight-seers. "Titus! Titus! *Io triumphe!*" Even now the troops are collected near the Temple of Apollo, outside the gates, waiting for the signal to march. In the parching Roman morning, the hot dust rises and clouds over the city — an aureole of triumph. The horses on the Arch of Nero paw the golden dust,

but it passes, passes, brushing along their burnished sides like wind.

What is that sound? The marble city shivers to the treading of feet. Caesar's legions marching, foot — foot — hundreds, thousands of feet. They beat the ground, rounding each step double. Coming — coming — cohort after cohort, with brazen trumpets marking the time. One — two — one — two — laurel-crowned each one of you, cactus-fibred, harsh as sand grinding the rocks of a treeless land, rough and salt as a Dead Sea wind, only the fallen are left behind. Blood-red plumes, jarring to the footfalls; they have passed through the gate, they are in the walls of the mother city, of marble Rome. Their tunics are purple embroidered with gold, their armour clanks as they walk, the cold steel of their swords is chill in the sun, each is a hero, one by one, endless companies, the soldiers come. Back to Rome with a victor's spoils, with a victor's wreath on every head, and Judah broken is dead, dead! "*Io triumphe!*" The shout knocks and breaks upon the spears of the legionaries.

The God of the Jews is overborne, he has failed his people. See the stuffs from the Syrian looms, and the vestments of many-colours, they were taken from the great Temple at Jerusalem. And the watching crowds split their voices acclaiming the divine triumph. Mars, and Juno, and Minerva, and the rest, those gods are the best who bring victory! And the beasts they have over there! Is that a crocodile? And that bird with a tail as long as a banner, what do you call that? Look at the elephants, and the dromedaries! They are harnessed in jewels. Oh! Oh! The beautiful sight! Here come the prisoners, dirty creatures. "That's a good-looking girl there. I have rather a fancy for a Jewess. I'll get her, by Bacchus, if I have to mortgage my farm. A man too, of course, to keep the breed going; it will be a good investment, although, to be sure, I want the girl myself. Castor and Pollux, did you see that picture! Ten men disembowelled on the steps of the altar. That is better than a gladiator show any day. I wish I had been there.

Simon, oh, Simon! Spit at him, Lucullus.
Thumbs down for Simon! Fancy getting
him alive, I wonder he didn't kill himself
first like Cleopatra. This is a glorious day,
I haven't had such fun in years."

The bronze horses tread quietly above
the triumphing multitudes. They too
have been spoils of war, yet they stand
here on the Arch of Nero dominating
Rome. Time passes — passes — but the
horses, calm and contained, move forward,
dividing one minute from another
and leaving each behind.

You should be still now, Roman popu-
lace. These are the decorations of the
Penetralia, the holy Sanctuary which your
soldiers have profaned. But the people
jeer and scoff, and comment on the queer
articles carried on the heads of the sol-
diers. Tragedy indeed! They see no
tragedy, only an immense spectacle,
unique and satisfying. The crowd clears
its throat and spits and shouts "*Io
triumphe! Io triumphe!*" against the
cracking blare of brazen trumpets.

Slowly they come, the symbols of a
beaten religion: the Golden Table for
the Shew-Bread, the Silver Trumpets that
sounded the Jubilee, the Seven-Branched
Candlestick, the very Tables of the Law
which Moses brought down from Mount
Sinai. Can Jupiter conquer these? Slowly
they pass, glinting in the sunlight, star-
ing in the light of day, mocked and ex-
hibited. Lord God of Hosts, fall upon
these people, send your thunders upon
them, hurl the lightnings of your wrath
against this multitude, raze their marble
city so that not one stone remain stand-
ing. But the sun shines unclouded, and
the holy vessels pass onward through the
Campus Martius, through the Circus
Flaminius, up the Via Sacra to the Cap-
itol, and then . . . The bronze horses look
into the brilliant sky, they trot slowly
without moving, they advance slowly, one
foot raised. There is always another step
— one, and another. How many does not
matter, so that each is taken.

The *spolia opima* have passed. The
crowd holds its breath and quivers. Every-

one is tiptoed up to see above his neigh-
bour; they sway and brace themselves in
their serried ranks. Away, over the heads,
silver eagles glitter, each one marking the
passage of a legion. The "Victorious
Legion" goes by, the "Indomitable Le-
gion," the "Spanish Legion," and those
with a crested lark on their helmets, and
that other whose centurions are almost
smothered under the shining reflections
of the medallions fastened to their
armour. Cohort after cohort, legion on
the heels of legion, the glistening greaves
rise and flash and drop and pale, scaling
from sparkle to dullness in a series of
rhythmic angles, constantly repeated.
They swing to the tones of straight brass
trumpets, they jut out and fall at the call
of spiral bugles. Above them, the pointed
shields move evenly, right to left — right
to left. The horses curvet and prance,
and shiver back, checked, on their
haunches; the javelins of the horsemen
are so many broad-ended sticks of flame.

Those are the eagles of the Imperial
Guard, and behind are two golden
chariots. "*Io triumphe!*" The roar drowns
the trumpets and bugles, the clatter of
the horses' hoofs is a mere rattle of sand
ricocheting against the voice of welcom-
ing Rome. The Emperor Vespasian rides
in one chariot, in the other stands Titus.
Titus, who has subdued Judea, who has
humbled Jehovah, and brought the sacred
vessels of the Lord God of Hosts back
with him as a worthy offering to the
people of Rome. Cheer, therefore, good
people, you have the Throne of Heaven
to recline upon; you are possessed of the
awful majesty of the God of the Jews;
beneath your feet are spread the emblems
of the Most High; and your hands are
made free of the sacred instruments of
Salvation.

What god is that who falls before pikes
and spears! Here is another god, his
face and hands stained with vermilion,
after the manner of the Capitoline Jupi-
ter. His car is of ivory and gold, green
plumes nod over the heads of his horses,
the military bracclets on his arms seem
like circling serpents of bitter flame. The
milk-white horses draw him slowly to the
Capitol, step by step, along the Via Tri-
umphalis, and step by step the old golden

horses on the Arch of Nero tread down the hours of the lapsing day.

That night, forty elephants bearing candelabra light up the ranges of pillars supporting the triple portico of the Capitol. Forty illuminated elephants — and the light of their candles is reflected in the polished sides of the great horses, above, on the Arch of Nero, slowly trotting forward, stationary yet moving, in the soft night which hangs over Rome.

PAVANE TO A BRASS ORCHESTRA

Water falls from the sky, and green-fanged lightning mouths the heavens. The Earth rolls upon itself, incessantly creating morning and evening. The moon calls to the waters, swinging them forward and back, and the sun draws closer and as rhythmically recedes, advancing in the pattern of an ancient dance, making a figure of leaves and aridness. Harmony of chords and pauses, fugue of returning balmees, canon and canon repeating the theme of Earth, Air, and Water.

A single cymbal-crash of Fire, and for an instant the concerted music ceases. But it resumes — Earth, Air, and Water, and out of it rise the metals, unconsumed. Brazen cymbals, trumpets of silver, bells of bronze. They mock at fire. They burn upon themselves and retain their entities. Not yet the flame which shall destroy them. They shall know all flames but one. They shall be polished and corroded, yet shall they persist and play the music which accompanies the strange ceremonious dance of the sun.

CONSTANTINOPLE

Empire of the East! Byzantium! Constantinople! The Golden City of the World. A crystal fixed in aquamarines; a jewel-box set down in a seaside garden. All the seas are as blue as Spring lupins, and there are so many seas. Look where you please, forward, back, or down, there is water. The deep blue water of crisp ripples, the long light shimmer of flat undulations, the white glare, smoothing into purple, of a sun-struck ebb. The Bosphorus winds North to the Black Sea.

The Golden Horn curves into the Sweet Waters. The edge of the city swerves away from the Sea of Marmora. Aquamarines, did I say? Sapphires, beryls, lapis-lazuli, amethysts, and felspar. What-ever stones there are, bluer than gentians, bluer than cornflowers, bluer than asters, bluer than periwinkles. So blue that the city must be golden to complement the water. A gold city, shimmering and shimmering, starting up like mica from the green of lemon trees, and olives, and cypresses.

Gold! Gold! Walls and columns covered with gold. Domes of churches resplendent with gold. Innumerable statues of "bronze fairer than pure gold," and courts paved with golden tiles. Beyond the white and rose-coloured walls of Saint Sophia, the city rounds for fourteen great miles; fourteen miles of onychite, and porphyry, and marble; fourteen miles of colonnades, and baths, and porticoes; fourteen miles of gay, garish, gaudy, glaring gold. Why, even the Imperial *triremes* in the harbour have gold embroidered gonfalons, and the dolphins, ruffling out of the water between them, catch the colour and dive, each a sharp cutting disk-edge of yellow flame.

It is the same up above, where statues spark like stars jutted from a mid-day sky. There are golden Emperors at every crossing, and golden Virgins crowding every church-front. And, in the centre of the great Hippodrome, facing the *triremes* and the leaping dolphins, is a fine chariot of Corinthian brass. Four horses harnessed to a gilded *quadriga*. The horses pace evenly forward, in a moment they will be trampling upon space, facing out to sea on the currents of the morning breeze. But their heads are arched and checked, gracefully they pause, one leg uplifted, seized and baffled by the arrested movement. They are the horses of Constantine, brought from Rome, so people say, buzzing in the Augustaion. "Fine horses, hey?" "A good breed, Persia from the look of them, though they're a bit thick in the barrel for the horses they bring us from there." "They bring us their worst, most likely." "Oh, I don't know, we buy pretty well. Why, only the other day I gave a mint of money for a

cargo of Egyptian maize." "Lucky dog, you'll make on that, with all the harvest here ruined by the locusts."

It is a pretty little wind which plays along the sides of the gilded horses, a coquettish little sea wind, blowing and listing and finally dropping away altogether and going to sleep in a plane-tree behind the Hippodrome.

Constantinople is a yellow honey-comb, with fat bees buzzing in all its many-sided cells. Bees come over the flower-blue seas; bees humming from the Steppes of Tartary, from the long line of Nile-fed Egypt. Tush! What would you! Where there is gold there are always men about it; to steal it, to guard it, to sit and rot under its lotus-shining brilliance. The very army is woven of threads drawn from the edges of the world. Byzantines are merchantmen, they roll and flounder in the midst of gold coins, they tumble and wallow in money-baths, they sit and chuckle under a continuous money-spray. And ringed about them is the army, paid to shovel back the scattering gold pieces: Dalmatians with swords and arrows; Macedonians with silver belts and gilt shields; Scholarij, clad in rose-coloured tunics; Varangians, shouldering double battle-axes. When they walk, the rattle of them can be heard pattering back from every wall and doorway. It clacks and cracks even in the Copper Market, above the clang of cooking pots and the wrangling whine of Jewish traders. Constantinople chatters, buzzes, screams, growls, howls, squeals, snorts, brays, croaks, screeches, crows, neighs, gabbles, purrs, hisses, brawls, roars, shouts, mutters, calls, in every sort of crotchet and demi-semi-quaver, wavering up in a great contrapuntal murmur — *adagio*, *maestoso*, *capriccioso*, *scherzo*, *staccato*, *crescendo*, *vivace*, *veloce*, *brio* — *brio*! A racket of dissonance, a hubbub of harmony. Chords? Discords? Answer: Byzantium!

People pluck the strings of rebecks and psalteries; they shock the cords of lyres; they batter tin drums, and shatter the guts of kettle-drums when the Emperor goes to Saint Sophia to worship at an

altar of precious stones fused into a bed of gold and silver, and, as he walks up the nave between the columns of green granite, and the columns of porphyry, under the golden lily on the Octagonal Tower, the bells pour their notes over the roofs, spilling them in single jets down on each side of the wide roofs. Drip — drip — drip — out of their hearts of beaten bronze, slipping and drowning in the noise of the crowds clustered below.

On the top of the Hippodrome, the bronze horses trot toward the lupin-coloured Sea of Marmora, slowly, without moving; and, behind them, the spokes of the *quadriga* wheels remain separate and single, with the blue sky showing between each one.

What a city is this, builded of gold and alabaster, with myrtle and roses strewn over its floors, and doors of embossed silver opening upon golden trees where jewelled birds sing clock-work notes, and fountains flow from the beaks of silver eagles. All this splendour cooped within the fourteen miles of a single city, forsooth! In Britain, they sit under oaken beams; in France, they eat with hunting-knives; in Germany, men wear coats of their wives' weaving. In Italy — but there is a Pope in Italy! The bronze horses pause on the marble Hippodrome, and days blow over them, brushing their sides like wind.

It is May eleventh in Constantinople, and the Spring-blue sea shivers like a field of lupins run over by a breeze. Every tree and shrub spouted over every garden-wall flouts a chromatic sequence of greens. A long string of camels on the Bridge of Justinian moves, black and ostrich-like, against the sheen of water. A swallow sheers past the bronze horses and drops among the pillars on top of the curve of the Hippodrome; the great cistern on the Spina reflects a speckless sky. It is race-day in Constantinople, and the town is turned out upon the benches of the Hippodrome, waiting for the procession to begin. "Hoi! You fellows on the top tier, do you see anything?"

"Nothing yet, but I hear music." "Music! Oh, Lord! I should think you did. Clear the flagged course there, the procession is coming." "Down in front. Sit down, you." "Listen. Oh, dear, I'm so fidgety. If the Green doesn't win, I'm out a fortune." "Keep still, will you, we can't hear the music, you talk so loud." "Here they come! Green! Green! Green! Drown those Blues over there. Oh, Green, I say!"

Away beyond, through the gates, flag-olets are squealing, and trumpets are splitting their brass throats and choking over the sound. Patter—patter—patter—horses' hoofs on flagstones. They are coming under the paved arch. There is the President of the Games in a tunic embroidered with golden palm-branches; there is the Emperor in his pearl-lappeted cap, and his vermilion buskins; and here are the racers—Green—Blue—driving their chariots, easily standing in their high-wheeled chariots. The sun whitens the knives in their girdles, the reins flash in the sun like ribbons of spun glass. Three-year-olds in the Green chariot, so black they are blue. Four blue-black horses, with the sheen of their flanks glistening like the grain of polished wood. The little ears point forward, their teeth tease the bits. They snort and jerk, and the chariot wheels quirk over an out-standing stone and jolt down, flat and rumbling. The Blue chariot-driver handles a team of greys, white as the storks who nest in the cemetery beyond the Moslem quarter. He gathers up his reins, and the horses fall back against the pole, clattering, then fling forward, meet the bit, rear up, and swing inward, settling gradually into a nervous jiggling as they follow round the course. "Blue! Blue! Go for him, Blue!" from the North Corner. "Hurrah for the Blue! Blue to Eternity!" Slowly the procession winds round the Spina, and the crowd stands up on the seats and yells and cheers and waves handkerchiefs, sixty thousand voices making such a noise that only the high screaming of the flag-olets can be heard above it. The horses toss and twitch, the harness jingles, and the gilded eggs and dolphins on the Spina coruscate in versatile coloured stars.

Above the Emperor's balcony, the bronze horses move quietly forward, and the sun outlines the great muscles of their lifted legs.

They have reached the Grand Stand again, and the chariots are shut and barred in their stalls. The multitude, rustling as though they were paper being folded, settles down into their seats. The President drops a napkin, the bars are unlocked, and the chariots in a double rush take the straight at top speed, Blue leading, Green saving up for the turn at the curve. Round the three cones at the end, Blue on one wheel, Green undercutting him. Blue turns wide to right himself, takes the outside course and flashes up the long edge so that you cannot count two till he curves again. Down to the Green Corner, Blue's off horses slipping just before the cones, one hits the pole, loses balance and falls, drags a moment, catches his feet as the chariot slows for the circle, gathers, plunges, and lunges up and on, while the Greens on the benches groan and curse. But the black team is worse off, the inside near colt has got his leg over a trace. Green checks his animals, the horse kicks free, but Blue licks past him on the up way, and is ahead at the North turn by a wheel length. Green goes round, flogging to make up time. Two eggs and dolphins gone, three more to go. The pace has been slow so far, now they must brace up. Bets run high, screamed out above the rumble of the chariots. "Ten on the Green." "Odds fifty for the Blue." "Double mine; those greys have him." "The blacks, the blacks, lay you a hundred to one the blacks beat." Down, round, up, round, down, so fast they are only dust puffs, one can scarcely see which is which. The horses are badly blown now, and the drivers yell to them, and thrash their churning flanks. The course is wet with sweat and blood, the wheels slide over the wet course. Green negotiates the South curve with his chariot sideways; Blue skids over to the flagged way and lames a horse on the stones. The Emperor is on his feet, staring through his emerald snow-glass. Once more round for the

Down for the last time, Blue's lame horse delays him, but he flays him with the whip and the Green Corner fuds them abreast. The Greens on the seats burst up standing, "Too far out! Well turned!" "The Green's got it!" "Well done, Hirpinus!" The Green driver disappears up the long side to the goal, waving his right hand, but Blue's lame horse staggers, stumbles, and goes down, settling into the dust with a moan. Vortex of dust, struggling horses, golden glitter of the broken chariot. "Overthrown, by the Holy Moses! And hurt too! Well, well, he did his best, that beast always looked skittish to me." "Is he dead, do you think? They've got the litter." "Most likely. Green! Green! See, they're crowning him. Green and the people! Oh-hé! Green!"

Cool and imperturbable, the four great gilt horses slowly pace above the marble columns of the Grand Stand. They gaze out upon the lupin-blue water beyond the Southern curve. Can they see the Island of Corfu from up there, do you think? There are vessels at the Island of Corfu waiting to continue a journey. The great horses trot forward without moving, and the dust of the race-track sifts over them and blows away.

Constantinople from the Abbey of San Stefano: bubbles of opal and amber thrust up in a distant sky, pigeon-coloured nebulae closing the end of a long horizon. Tilting to the little waves of a harbour, the good ships, *Aquila*, *Paradiso*, *Pellegrina*, leaders of a fleet of galleys: *dromi*, *hippogogi*, vessels carrying timber for turrets, strong vessels holding mangonels. Proud vessels under an ancient Doge, keeping Saint John's Day at the Abbey of San Stefano, within sight of Constantinople.

Knights in blue and crimson inlaid armour clank up and down the gang-planks of the vessels. Flags and banners flap loosely at the mast-heads. There is the banner of Baldwin of Flanders, the standard of Louis of Blois, the oriflamme of Boniface of Montferrat, the pennon of Hugh, Count of Saint Paul, and last, greatest, the gonfalon of Saint Mark,

dripped so low it almost touches the deck, with the lion of Venice crumpled in its windless folds.

Saint John's Day, and High Mass in the Abbey of San Stefano. They need God's help who would pass over the double walls and the four hundred towers of Constantinople. *Te Deum Laudamus!* The armoured knights make the sign of the cross, lightly touching the crimson and azure devices on their breasts with mailed forefingers.

South wind to the rescue; that was a good mass. "Boatswain, what's the direction of that cat's-paw, veering round a bit? Good."

Fifty vessels making silver paths in the Summer-blue Sea of Marmora. Fifty vessels passing the Sweet Waters, blowing up the Bosphorus.

Strike your raucous gongs, City of Byzantium. Run about like ants between your golden palaces. These vessels are the chalices of God's wrath. The spirit of Christ walking upon the waters. Or is it anti-Christ? This is the true Church. Have we not the stone on which Jacob slept, the rod which Moses turned into a serpent, a portion of the bread of the Last Supper? We are the Virgin's chosen abiding place; why, the picture which Saint Luke painted of her is in our keeping. We have pulled the sun's rays from the statue of Constantine and put up the Cross instead. Will that bring us nothing? Cluster round the pink and white striped churches, throng the alabaster churches, fill the naves with a sound of chanting. Strike the terror-gongs and call out the soldiers, for even now the plumed knights are disembarking, and the snarling of their trumpets mingles with the beating of the gongs.

The bronze horses on the Hippodrome, harnessed to the gilded *quadriga*, step forward slowly. They proceed in a measured cadence. They advance without moving. There are lights and agitation in the city, but the air about the horses has the violet touch of night.

Now, now, you crossbowmen and

archers, you go first. Stand along the gunwales and be ready to jump. Keep those horses still there, don't let them get out of order. Lucky we thought of the hides. Their damnable Greek fire can't hurt us now. Up to the bridge, knights. Three of you abreast, on a level with the towers. What's a shower of arrows against armour! An honourable dint blotting out the head of a heron, half a plume sheared off a helmet so that it leers cock-eyed through the press. Tut! Tut! Little things, the way of war. Jar, jolt, mud—the knights clash together like jumbled chess-men, then leap over the bridges. Confusion—confusion—raps—bangs—lurches—blows—battle-axes thumping on tin shields; bolts bumping against leathern bucklers. "A Boniface to the Rescue!" "Baldwin forever!" "Viva San Marco!" Such a pounding, pummelling, pitching, pointing, piercing, pushing, pelting, poking, panting, punching, parrying, pulling, prodding, piking, piling, passing, you never did see. Stones pour out of the mangonels; arrows fly thick as mist. Swords twist against swords, bill-hooks batter bill-hooks, staves rattle upon staves. One, two, five men up a scaling ladder. Chop down on the first, and he rolls off the ladder with his skull in two halves; rip up the bowels of the second, he drips off the ladder like an overturned pail. But the third catches his adversary between the legs with a pike and pitches him over as one would toss a truss of hay. Way for the three ladder men! Their feet are on the tower, their plumes flower, argent and gold, above the muck of slaughter. From the main truck of the ships there is a constant seeping of Venetians over the walls of Constantinople. They flow into the city, they throw themselves upon the beleaguered city. They smash her defenders, and crash her soldiers to mere bits of broken metal.

Byzantines, Copts, Russians, Persians, Armenians, Moslems, the great army of the Franks is knocking at the gates of your towers. Open the gates. Open, open, or we will tear down your doors, and breach the triple thickness of your walls. Seventeen burning boats indeed, and have the Venetians no boat-hooks?

They make pretty fireworks to pleasure our knights of an evening when they come to sup with Doge Dandolo. At night we will sleep, but in the morning we will kill again. Under your tents, helmeted knights; into your cabin, old Doge. The stars glitter in the Sca of Marmora, and above the city, black in the brilliance of the stars, the great horses of Constantinople advance, pausing, blotting their shadows against the sprinkled sky.

From June until September, the fracas goes on. The chanting of masses, the shouting of battle songs, sweep antiphonally over Constantinople. They bleed and blur, but what is that light tinkling? Tambourines? What is that snapping? Castanets? What is that yellow light in the direction of the Saracen mosque? My God! Fire! Gold of metals, you have met your king. Ringed and crowned, he takes his place in the jewelled city. Gold of fire mounted upon all the lesser gods. The twin tongues of flame flaunt above the housetops. Banners of scarlet, spears of saffron, spikes of rose and melted orange. What are the little flags of the Crusaders to these! They clamoured for pay and won the elements. Over the Peninsula of Marmora it comes. The whips of its fire-thongs lash the golden city. A conflagration half a league wide. Magnificent churches, splendid palaces, great commercial streets, are burning. Golden domes melt and liquefy, and people flee from the dripping of them. Lakes of gold lie upon the pavements; pillars crack and tumble, making dams and bridges over the hot gold. Two days, two nights, the fire rages, and through the roar of it the little cries of frightened birds come thin and pitiful. Earth pleading with fire. Earth begging quarter of the awful majesty of fire. The birds wheel over Constantinople; they perch upon the cool bronze horses standing above the Hippodrome. The quiet horses who wait and advance. This is not their fire, they trample on the luminousness of flames, their strong hind legs plant them firmly on the marble coping. They watch the falling of the fire, they gaze upon the ruins spread

about them, and the pungence of charred wood brushes along their tarnished sides like wind.

The Franks have made an Emperor and now the Greeks have murdered him. The Doge asks for fifty *centenaria* in gold to pay his sailors. Who will pay, now that the Emperor is dead? Declare a siege and pay yourselves, Count, and Marquis, and Doge. Set your ships bow to stern, a half a league of them. Sail up the Golden Horn, and attack the walls in a hundred places. You fail to-day, but you will win to-morrow. Bring up your battering-rams and ballistae; hurl stones from your mangonels; run up your scaling ladders and across your skin bridges. Winter is over and Spring is in your veins. Your blood mounts like sap, mount up the ladder after it. Two ships to a tower, and four towers taken. Three gates battered in. The city falls. Cruel saints, you have betrayed your votaries. Even the relic of the Virgin's dress in the Panhagia of Blachernae has been useless. The knights enter Byzantium, and their flickering pennants are the flamelets of a new conflagration. Fire of flesh burning in the blood of the populace. They would make the sign of the cross, would they, so that the Franks may spare them? But the sap is up in the Frankish veins, the fire calls for fuel. Blood burns to who will ignite it. The swords itch for the taste of entrails, the lances twitch at sight of a Byzantine. Feed, Fire! Here are men, and women, and children, full of blood for the relish of your weapons. Spring sap, how many women! Good Frankish seed for the women of Byzantium. Blood and lust, you shall empty yourselves upon the city. Your swords shall exhaust themselves upon these Greeks. Your hands shall satisfy themselves with gold. Spit at the priests. This is the Greek church, not ours. Grab the sacred furniture of the churches, fornicate upon the high altar of Saint Sophia, and load the jewels upon the donkeys you have driven into the church to receive them. Old pagan Crusaders, this is the Orgy of Spring! Lust and blood, the birthright of the world.

The bright, shining horses tread upon the clean coping of the Hippodrome, and the Sea of Marmora lies before them like a lupin field run over by a breeze.

What are you now, Constantinople? A sacked city; and the tale of your plundering shall outdo the tale of your splendours for wonder. Three days they pillage you. Burmese rubies rattle in the pockets of common soldiers. The golden tree is hacked to bits and carried off by crossbowmen. An infantry sergent hiccoughs over the wine he drinks from an altar cup. The knights live in palaces and dip their plumes under the arch of the Emperor's bed-chamber.

In the Sea of Marmora, the good ships *Aquila*, *Paradiso*, *Pellegrina* swing at anchor. The *dromi* and *hippogogi* ride free and empty. They bob to the horses high above them on the Hippodrome. They dance to the rhythmic beat of hammers floating out to them from the city of Constantinople.

Throb — throb — a dying pulse counts its vibrations. Throb — throb — and each stroke means a gobbet of gold. They tear it down from the walls and doors, they rip it from ceilings and pry it up from floors. They chip it off altars, they rip it out of panels, they hew it from obelisks, they gouge it from enamels. This is a death dance, a whirl-igig, a skeleton city footing a jig, a tarantella quirked to hammer-stroke time; a corpse in motley ogling a crime. Tap — tap — tap — goes the pantomime.

Grinning devils watch church cutting the throat of church. Chuckling gargoyles in France, in Britain, rub their stomachs and squeeze themselves together in an ecstasy of delight. Ho! Ho! Marquis Boniface, Count Hugh, Sieur Louis. What plunder do you carry home? What relics do you bring to your Gothic cathedrals? The head of Saint Clement? The arm of John the Baptist? A bit of the wood of the True Cross? Statues are only so much metal, but these are treasures worth fighting for. Fighting, quotha! Murdering, stealing. The Pope will absolve you, only bring him home a tear of Christ, and you will see. A tear of Christ! *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!*

Oh, pitiful world! Pitiful knights in your inlaid armour! Pitiful Doge, preening himself in the Palace of Blachernael

Above the despoiled city, the Corinthian horses trot calmly forward, without moving, and the *quadriga* behind them glitters in the sun.

People have blood, but statues have gold, and silver, and bronze. Melt them! Melt them! "Gee! Haw!" Guide the oxen carefully. Pour oxen to drag the head of Juno to the furnace. White oxen to transport Minerva; fawn-coloured oxen for the colossal Hercules of Lysippus. Pour them into the furnaces so that they run out mere soft metal ripe for coining. Two foot-sergeants as much as a knight. Flatten out Constantinople. Raze her many standing statues, shave the Augustan to a stark stretch of paving-stones. Melt the bones of beauty, indomitable Crusaders, and pay the Venetians fifty thousand silver marks as befits an honest company of dedicated gentlemen.

"The Doge wants those horses, does he? Just as they are, unmelted? Holy Saint Christopher, what for? Pity he didn't speak sooner, I sent Walter the Smith to cut the gold off them this morning, but it sticks like the very devil and he hasn't done much. Well, well, the Doge can have them. A man with a whim must be given way to, particularly when he owns all the ships. How about that gilded chariot?" "Oh, he can't manage that. Just the horses. You were in a mighty hurry with that cutting, it seems to me. You've made them look like zebras, and he'll not like that. He's a bit of a connoisseur in horse-flesh, even if he does live in the water. Wants to mate them to the dolphins probably, and go a-campaigning astride of fishes. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Steady there, lower the horses carefully, they are for the Doge." One — one — one — one — down from the top of the Hippodrome. One — one — one — one — on ox-carts rumbling toward the water's edge, in boats rowing over the lupin-coloured sea. Great horses, trot calmly on your sides, roll quietly to the

heaving of the bright sea. Above you, sails go up, anchors are weighed. The gonfalon of Saint Mark flings its extended lion to the freshening wind. To Venice, *Aquila*, *Paradiso*, *Pellegrina*, with your attendant *dromi*! To Venice! Over the running waves of the Spring-blue sea.

BENEATH A CROOKED RAINBOW

As the seasons of Earth are Fire, so are the seasons of men. The departure of Fire is a change, and the coming of Fire is a greater change. Demand not that which is over, but acclaim what is still to come. So the Earth builds up her cities, and falls upon them with weeds and nettles; and Water flows over the orchards of past centuries. On the sand-hills shall apple trees flourish, and in the water-courses shall be gathered a harvest of plums. Earth, Air, and Water abide in fluctuation. But man, in the days between his birth and dying, fashions metals to himself, and they are without heat or cold. In the Winter solstice, they are not altered like the Air, nor hardened like the Water, nor shrivelled like the Earth, and the heats of Summer bring them no burgeoning. Therefore are metals outside the elements. Between melting and melting they are beyond the Water, and apart from the Earth, and severed from the Air. Fire alone is of them, and master. Withdrawn from Fire, they dwell in isolation.

VENICE

Venice anadyomenel! City of reflections! A cloud of rose and violet poised upon a changing sea. City of soft waters washing marble stairways, of feet moving over stones with the continuous sound of slipping water. Floating, wavering city, shot through with the silver threads of water, woven with the green-gold of flowing water, your marble Rivas block the tides as they sweep in over the Lagoons, your towers fling golden figures of Fortune into the carnation sky at sunset, the polished marble of the walls of old palaces burns red to the flaring torches set in cressets before your doors.

Strange city, belonging neither to earth nor water, where the slender spandrels of vines melt into the carvings of arched windows, and crabs ferry themselves through the moon-green water rippling over the steps of a decaying church.

Beautiful, faded city. The sea wind has dimmed your Oriental extravagance to an iris of rose, and amber, and lilac. You are dim and reminiscent like the frayed hangings of your State Chambers, and the stucco of your house-fronts crumbles into the canals with a gentle dripping which no one notices.

A tabernacle set in glass, an ivory ornament resting upon a table of polished steel. It is the surface of the sea, spangled, crinkled, engine-turned to whorls of blue and silver, ridged in waves of flower-green and gold. Sequins of gold skip upon the water, crocus-yellow flames dart against white smoothness and disappear, wafers of many colours float and intermingle. The Lagoons are a white fire burning to the blue band of the Lido, restlessly shifting under the cool, still, faint peaks of the Euganean Hills.

Where is there such another city? She has taken all the Orient to herself. She has treated with Barbarossa, with Palacologus, with the Pope, the Tzar, the Caliph, the Sultan, and the Grand Khan. Her returning vessels have discharged upon the mole metals and jewels, pearls from the Gulf of Oman, silks from Damascus, camel's-hair fabrics from Erzeroum. The columns of Saint John of Acre have been landed on her jetties, and the great lions from the Piræus. Now she rests and glitters, holding her treasures lightly, taking them for granted, chatting among the fringes, and tinkling sherbet spoons of an evening in the dark shadow of the Campanile.

Up from the flickering water, beyond the laced colonnades of the Ducal Palace — golden bubbles, flung out upon a sky of ripe blue. Arches of white and scarlet flowers, pillars of porphyry, columns of jasper, open loggias of deep-green serpentine flaked with snow. In the architraves, stones chipped and patterned, the blues studded with greens, the greens circling round yellows, reds of every depth,

clear purples, heliotropes clouded into a vague white. Above them, all about them, the restless movement of carved stone; it is involuted and grotesque, it is acanthus leaves and roses, it is palm branches and vine tendrils, it is feathers and the tails of birds, all blowing on a day of *scirocco*. Angels rise among the swirling acanthus leaves, angels and leaves weaving an upstarting line, ending in the great star of Christ struck upon the edge of a golden dome, Saint Mark's Church, gazing down the length of the chequered Piazza, thrusting itself upon the black and white pavement, rising out of the flat tiles in a rattle of colours, soaring toward the full sky like a broken prism whirling at last into the gold bubbles of its five wide domes. The Campanile mounts above it, but the Campanile is only brick, even if it has a pointed top which you cannot see without lying on your back. The pigeons can fly up to it, but the pigeons prefer the angles and hollows of the sculptured church.

Saint Mark's Church — and over the chief arch, among the capitals of foaming leaves and bent grasses, trample four great horses. They are of gold, of gilding so fine that it has not faded. They are tamished here and there, but their fair colour overcomes the green corroding and is a blinding to the eyes in sunshine. Four magnificent, muscular horses, lightly stepping upon traceried columns, one forefoot raised to launch them forward. They stand over the high door, caught back a moment before springing, held an instant to the perfection of a movement about to begin, and the pigeons circle round them brushing against their sides like wind.

But, dear me, Saint Mark's is the only thing in the Piazza that is not talking, and walking to and fro, and cheapening shoe buckles at a stall, and playing *pan-fil* and *bassetta* at little round tables by the wall, and singing to guitars, and whistling to poodles, and shouting to acquaintances, and giving orders to servants, and whispering a scandal behind fans, and carrying tomatoes in copper pans, and flying on messages, and lying to creditors, and spying on suspects, and

colliding with masked loungers, and crying out the merits of fried fish, caught when the tide comes leaping through the Tre Porti. A dish of tea at a coffee-house, and then cross one leg over the other and wait. She will be here by seven o'clock, and a faithful *cicisbeo* has her charms to muse upon until then. Ah, Venice, chattering, flattering, occupied Venice, what are the sculptured angels and golden horses to you. You are far too busy to glance at them. They are chiefly remarkable as curiosities, for whoever saw a real angel, and as to a real horse — "I saw a stuffed one for a *soldo*, the other day, in the Campo San Polo. *Un elephanto*, Gastone, taller than my shoulder and the eyes were made of glass, they would pass for perfect any day."

Ah, the beautiful palaces, with their gateways of gilded iron frilled into arms and coronets, quilled into shooting leaves and tendrils, filled with rosettes, fretted by heraldic emblems! Ah, the beautiful taste, which wastes no time on heavy stone, but cuts flowers, and foliage, and flourishes, and ribbons out of — stucco! Bows of stucco glued about a ceiling by Tiepolo, and ranged underneath, frail white-and-gold, rose-and-gold, green-and-gold chairs, fair consoles of polished lacquer supporting great mirrors of Murano. Hangings of blue silk with silver fringes, behind your folds, la Signora Benzona accords a favour to the Cavalier Giuseppe Trevis. Upon a salmon-coloured sofa striped with pistachio-green, the Cavaliera Contarini flirts with both her *cicisbei* at once, in a charming impartiality. Kisses? Ah, indeed, certainly kisses. Hands tickling against hands? But assuredly, one for each of you. The heel of a left slipper caught against a buckled shoe, the toe of a right foot pressed beneath a broader sole; but the toll is finished. "Tut! Tut! Gentlemen! With the other present! Have you no delicacy? To-night perhaps, after the Ridotto, we will take a *giro* in my gondola as far as Malamocco, Signor Bianchi. And to-morrow, Carlo Pin, will you go to church with me? There is something in the tones of an organ, I know not what exactly, but it has its effect."

"You rang, *Illustrissima*?" "Of course I rang, Stupid, did you think it was the cat?" "Your nobility desires?" "The time, Blockhead, what is the time?" "Past seven, *Illustrissima*." "Ye Gods, how time passes when one sleeps! Bring my chocolate at once, and call Giannina." With a yawn, the lady rises, just as the sun fades away from the flying figure of Fortune on the top of the Dogana. "Candles, Moracchio." And the misty mirrors prick and pulsate with reflections of blurred flame. Flame-points, and behind them the puce-coloured curtains of a bed; an *escritoire* with feathered pens and Spanish wax; a table with rouge-pots and powder-boxes; a lady, naked as a Venus, slipping into a silk shift. In the misty mirrors, she is all curves and colour, all slenderness and tapering, all languor and vivacity. Even Giannina murmurs, "*Che bella Madonna mia!*" as she pulls the shift into place. But the door is ajar, a mere harmless crack to make a fuss about. "Only one eye, *Cara Mia*, I assure you the other saw nothing but the panel. I ask for so much, and I have only taken the pleasure of one little eye. I must kiss them, *Signora Bellissima*, two little red berries, like the fruit of the *potentillas* in the grass at Sant'Elena. *Musica! Musica!* The barque of music is coming down the canal. Sit on my knee a moment, the Casino can wait; and after you have won a thousand *zecchini*, will you be a second Danae and go with me to the early morning market? Then you shall come home and sleep all day in the great bed among the roses I shall buy for you. With your gold? Perhaps, my dearest tease, the luck has deserted me lately. But there are ways of paying, are there not, and I am an honourable man."

The great horses of Saint Mark's trot softly forward on their sculptured pedestals, without moving. Behind them, the glass of the arched window is dark, but the Piazza is a bowl of light, a tambourine of little bell-stroke laughter. The golden horses step forward, dimly shimmering in the light of the lamps below, and the pigeons sleep quietly on the stands at their feet.

Green Lion of Saint Mark upon your high pedestal! Winged Lion of Saint Mark, your head turned over the blind ing Lagoons to the blue Lido, your tail pointing down the sweeping flow of the Grand Canal! What do you see, Green Lion of the Patron Saint? Boats? Masts? Quaint paintings on the broad bows of *bragozzi*, orange sails contra crossing one another over tossing ripples. Gondolas tipping to the oars of the *barcazucchi*, slipping under the Ponte della Paglia, dipping between sardine *topi* skipping past the Piazzetta, curving away to the Giudecca, where it lies beyond the crystal pinacles of Santa Maria della Salute and San Giorgio Maggiore which has the lustré of roses.

What do you smell, Lion? Boiling hot chestnuts, fried cutlets, fried puffs of pastry, the pungent odour of salt water and of dead fish, the nostalgic aroma of sandal wood and myrrh, of musk, of leopard skins and the twin tusks of elephants.

And you, great Lion of the Ducal Palace, what goes on at your feet? People knotted together or scattering, pattering over the old stones in impertinent satin slippers, flippantly tipping the pavement with red heels. Whirls of people circle like the pigeons, knots of people spot the greyneß of the stones, ribbons of people file along the colonnades, rayed lines of people between the Procuratie stripe the pavement sideways, criss cross, at oblique angles. Spangles snap and fade, gems glitter. A gentleman in a buttercup coloured coat goes by with a bouquet. A sea green gown brocaded with cherry and violet stays an instant before a stall to buy a packet of ambergins. Pilgrims with staffs and cockles knock the stones as they shuffle along, a water carrier shouts out a song. A scarlet sacristan jingles his keys, purple robes of justices saunter at ease. Messer Goldoni hustles by to a rehearsal, and three famous *castrati*, i Signori Pacchierotti, April, Rubenelli, rustle their mantles and adjust their masks, ogling the ladies with gold lorgnons. Blind men snuffle into flageolets, marionette men hurry on to a distant Campo in a flurry of cotton streamers. If Venice is a flowing of water, it is also a flowing of

people. All Europe runs into this wide square. There is Monsieui Montesquieu just from France, taking notes on the sly, there is Mrs Piozzi, from England, with an eye to everything, even chicken coops, Herr Goethe, from the Court at Weimar, trying to overcome a fit of mental indigestion, Madame Vigée le Brun, questioning the merit of her work and that of Rosalba Carriera. You have much to watch, Lion, the whole earth cannot match the pageant of this great square, in the limpid sun shot air, between the towering Campanile and the blaze of Saint Mark's angels. Star fish patterns, jelly fish rounds of colour, if the sea quivers with variety so does the Piazza. But above, on the façade of the jewelled church, the horses do not change. They stand vigorous and immovable, stepping lightly as though poised upon glass. Metal horses set upon shifting shards of glass, and the soft diphthongs of the Venetian dialect float over them like wind.

There are two Venices, the one we walk upon, and the one which wavers up to us inverted from the water of the canals. The silver prow of a gondola winds round a wall, and in the moss brown water another gondola joins it, bottom to bottom, with the teeth of the prow infinitely repeated. A cypress closes the end of a rio, and driven into the thick water another cypress spindles beneath us, and the wake of our boat leaves its foliage cut to tatters as it passes on. We plough through the veined pinks and subdued scarlets of the façades of palaces, we sheer a path through a spotted sky and blunt the tip of a soaring campanile. Are we swimming in the heavens, turned legend and constellation? Truly it seems so. How you go on, Cavalier, certainly you are a foreigner to notice such things. The Lido, Giuseppe. I have a nostalgia for flowers to day, and besides, abroad so early in the afternoon — what shocking style! The custom of the country, my dear Sir, here we go to bed by sunlight as you will see."

Sweep out of the broad canal, turn to the hanging snow summits. Oh, the beautiful silver light, the blue light shimmering with silver. The clear sunlight on

rose brick and amber marble. The sky so pale it is white, so bright it is yellow, so cloudless it is blue. Oh, the shafts of sapphire striping the wide water, the specks of gold dancing along it, the diamond roses opening and shutting upon its surface! Some one is singing in a distant boat:

"*Amanti, ci vuole costanza in amor*"

Amando,

Penando,

Si spera, si, sì."

The lady shrugs her shoulders. "These fishermen are very droll. What do the *canaglia* know about love. Breeding, yes, that is certainly their affair, but love! *Più presto, Giuseppe.* How the sun burns!" Rock over the streaked Lagoon, gondola, peck the blue strips with white, shock purple shadows through the silver strata, set blocks of iris cannoning against gold. This is the rainbow over which we are floating, and the heart-shaped city behind us is a reliquary of old ivory laid upon azure silk. Your hand, Signor the Foreigner, be careful lest she wet those fine French stockings, they cost I do not know how much a pair. Now run away across the Lido, gathering violets and periwinkles. The lady has a whim for a *villeggiatura*, and why not? Those scarlet pomegranate blossoms will look well in her hair to-night at the opera. But one cannot linger long, already the Dolomites are turning pink, and there is a whole night ahead of us to be cajoled somehow. A mile away from Venice and it is too far. "*Felicissima notte!*" Wax candles shine in the windows. The little stars of the gondola lanterns glide between dark walls. Broken moonlight shivers in the canals. And the masks come out, thronging the streets and squares with a chequer-work of black cloaks and white faces. Little white faces floating like pond-lilies above the water. Floating faces adrift over unfathomable depths. Have you ever heard the words, *Libertà, Indipendenza, e Eguaglianza?* "What stuff and nonsense! Of course I have read your great writer, Rousseau; I cried my heart out over '*La Nouvelle Héloïse*,' but in practice! Wake my servants, the lazy fellows are always asleep, you will find them curled up on the stairs most likely. It is

time we went to the *Mendicanti* to hear the oratorio. Ah, but those poor orphans sing with a charm! It makes one weep to hear them, only the old *Maestro di Capella* will beat time with his music on the grill. It is quite ridiculous, they could go through it perfectly without him. *Misericordia!* The red light! That is the gondola of the Supreme Tribunal taking some poor soul to the Piombi; God protect him! But it does not concern us, my friend. *Ridiamo a duetto!*" Little tinkling drops from the oars of the boatmen, little tinkling laughter wafted across the moonlight.

Four horses parading in front of a splendid church. Four ancient horses with ears pointed forward, listening. One foot is raised, they advance without moving. To what do they listen? To the serenades they have heard so often? *Cavatine, canzonette*, dance songs, hymns, for six hundred years the songs of Venice have drifted past them, lightly, as the wings of pigeons. And month by month the old moon has sailed over them, as she did in Constantinople, as she did in Rome.

Saint Stephen's Day, and the Carnival! For weeks now Venice will be amused. Folly to think of anything but fun. Toot the fifes! Bang the drums! Did you ever see anything so jolly in all your life before? Keep your elbows to your sides, there isn't room to square them. "My! What a flare! Rockets in broad daylight! I declare they make the old horses of Saint Mark's blush pink when they burst. Thirsty? So am I, what will you have? Wine or oranges? Don't jostle so, old fellow, we can look in the window as well as you. See that apothecary's stall, isn't that a gay festoon? Curse me, if it isn't made of leeches; what will these shopkeepers do next! That mask has a well-turned ankle. Good evening, my charmer. You are as beautiful as a parrot, as white as linen, as light as a rabbit. Ay! O-o-h! The she-camel! She aimed her *confetti* right at my eye. Come on, Tito, let's go and see them head the bull. Hold on a minute though, somebody's pulling my cloak. Just one little squeeze, Beauty, you

shouldn't tweak a man's cloak if you don't want to be squeezed You plump little pudding, you little pecking pigeon, I'll get more next time Wow! Here comes Arlecchino Push back, push back, the comedians are coming Stow in your fat belly, *'lustrissimo*, you take up room enough for two"

Somebody beats a gong, and three drummers cleave a path through the crowd Bring! Bang! BANG! So loud it splits the heaving Mattachino leaps down the path He is in white, with red lacings and red shoes On his arm is a basket of eggs Right, left, into the crowd, skim the eggs Duck—jump—it is no use Plump, on some one's front, pit, against some one's hat The eggs crack, and scented waters run out of them, filling the air with the sweet smells of musk and bergamot But here is a wheel of colours rolling down the path Clown! Clown! It is Arlecchino, in his patched coat It was green and he has botched it with red, or is it yellow, or possibly blue It is hard to tell, he turns so fast Three somersaults, and he comes up standing, and makes a long nose, and sweeps off his hat with the hare's fud, and glares solemnly into the eyes of a gentleman in spectacles "Sir," says Arlecchino, "have you by chance a toothache? I can tell you how to cure it Take an apple, cut it into four equal parts, put one of these into your mouth and thrust your head into an oven until the apple is baked I swear on my honour you will never have the toothache again", Zip! Sizz! No use in the cane A pirouette and he is away again A hand spring, a double cut under, and the parti coloured rags are only a tag bouncing up out of surging black mantles But there is something more wonderful yet Set your faces to the Piazzetta people, push, slam, jam, to keep your places "A balloon is going up from the Dogana del Marc, a balloon like a moon or something else starry A meteor, a comet, I don't really know what, it looks, so they say, like a huge apricot, or a pear—yes, that's surely the thing—blushing red, mellow yellow, a fruit on the wing, garlanded with streamers and tails, all a whirl and a flutter Cut the string and she sails, till she lands in the gutter" "How do you

know she lands in the gutter, Booby?" "Where else should she land, unless in the sea?" "You're a fool, I suppose you sat up all night writing that doggerel" "Not at all, it is an improvisation" "Here, keep back, you can't push past me with your talk Oh! Look! Look!"

That is a balloon It rises slowly—slowly—above the Dogana It wavers, dips, and poises it mounts in the silver air, it floats without direction, suspended in movement, it hangs, a clear pear of red and yellow, opposite the melting, opal tinted city And the reflection of it also floats, perfect in colour but cooler, perfect in outline but more vague, in the glassy water of the Grand Canal The blue sky sustains it, the blue water encloses it Then balloon and reflection swing gently seaward One ascends, the other descends Each dwindles to a speck Ah, the semblance is gone, the water has nothing, but the sky focusses about a point of fire, a formless indescendence sailing higher, become a mere burning, until that too is absorbed in the brilliance of the clouds

You cheer, people, but you do not know for what A beautiful toy? Undoubtedly you think so Shout yourselves hoarse, you who have conquered the sea, do you underestimate the air? Joke, laugh, purblind populace You have been vouchsafed an awful vision, and you do nothing but clap your hands

That is over, and here is Pantalone calling to you "Going—going—I am selling my furniture Two dozen chairs of fine holland, fourteen tables of almond paste, six majolica mattresses full of scrapings of haycocks, a semolina bedcover, six truffled cushions, two pavilions of spider web trimmed with tassels made from the moustaches of Swiss doorkeepers Oh! The Moon! The Moon! The good little yellow moon, no bigger than an omelet of eight eggs Come, I will throw in the moon A quarter ducat for the moon, good people Take your opportunity"

Great gold horses, quietly stepping above the little mandarin figures, strong horses above the whirling porcelain fig

ures, are the pigeons the only birds in Venice? Have the swallows told you nothing, flying from the West?

The bells of Saint Mark's Church ring midnight. The carnival is over.

In the deserted square, the pavement is littered with feathers, confetti, orange-peel, and pumpkin-seeds. But the golden horses on the balcony over the high door trot forward, without moving, and the shadow of the arch above them is thrown farther and farther forward as the moon drops toward the Lagoon.

Bronze armies marching on a sea-shell city. Slanted muskets filing over the passes of tall Alps. Who is this man who leads you, carved in new bronze, supple as metal still cooling, firm as metal from a fresh-broken mold? A bright bronze general heading armies. The tread of his grenadiers is awful, continuous. How will it be in the streets of the glass city? These men are the flying letters of a new gospel. They are the tablets of another law. Twenty-eight, this general! Ah, but the metal is well compounded. He has been victorious in fourteen pitched battles and seventy fights; he has taken five hundred field pieces, and two thousand of heavy calibre; he has sent thirty millions back to the treasury of France. The Kings of Naples and Sardinia write him friendly letters; the Pope and the Duke of Parma weary themselves with compliments. The English have retired from Genoa, Leghorn, and Corsica.

Little glass masks, have you heard nothing of this man? What of the new French ambassador, Citizen Lallemon? You have seen his gondoliers and the *tricolore* cockade in their caps? It is a puzzling business, but you can hardly expect us to be alarmed, we have been a republic for centuries. Still, these new ideas are intriguing, they say several gentlemen have adopted them. "Alvise Pisani, my Dear, and Abbate Colalto, also Bragadin, and Soranza, and Labbia. Oh, there was much talk about it last night. Such strange notions! But the cockade is very pretty. I have the ribbon, and I am going to make a few. Signora Fontana gave me the pattern."

Columbus discovered America. Ah, it

was then you should have made your cockades. Is it Bonaparte or the Cape of Good Hope which has compassed your destiny? Little porcelain figures, can you stand the shock of bronze?

No, evidently. The quills of the Senate secretaries are worn blunt, writing note after note to the General of the Armies. But still he marches forward, and his soldiers, dressed as peasants, have invaded Brescia and Bergamo. And what a man! Never satisfied. He must have this—that—and other things as well. He must have guns, cannon, horses, mules, food, forage. What is all this talk of a Cisalpine Republic? The Senate wavers like so many sea anemones in an advancing tide. Ascension Day is approaching. Shall the Doge go in the *Bucentoro* to wed the sea "in token of real and perpetual dominion"? The Senate dictates, the secretaries write, and the *Arsenalotti* polish the brasses of the *Bucentoro* and wait. Brightly shine the overpolished brasses of the *Bucentoro*, but the ships in the Arsenal are in bad repair and the crews wanting.

It is Holy Saturday in Venice, and solemn processions march to the churches. The slow chanting of choirs rises above the floating city, but in the Citizen Lallemon's apartments is a jangling of spurred heels, a clanking of cavalry sabres. General Junot arrived in the small hours of the night. Holy Saturday is nothing to a reformed Frenchman; the General's business will not wait, he must see the Signory at once. Desert your churches, convene the College in haste. A bronze man cannot be opposed by a Senate of glass. Is it for fantasy that so many people are wearing the *tricolore*, or is it politeness to the visiting general? But what does he say? French soldiers murdered! Nonsense, a mere street row between Bergamese. But Junot thunders and clanks his sabre. A sword is a terrible thing in a cabinet of biscuit figurines. Let that pass. He has gone. But Venice is shaken. The stately palaces totter on their rotting piles, the *campi* buzz with voices, the Piazza undulates to a gesticulating multitude. Only the pigeons wheel unconcerned about the Campanile, and the great horses stand, poised and majes-

tic, beneath the mounting angels of Saint Mark's Church.

Ascension Day draws nearer. The brasses of the *Bucentoro* shine like gold. Surely the Doge will not desert his bride; or has the jilt tired of her long subjection? False water, upon your breast rock many navies, how should you remain true to a ship which fears to wet its keel. The *Bucentoro* glitters in the Arsenal, she blazes with glass and gilding drawn up safely on a runway of dry planks, while over the sea, beyond the Lido, rises the spark of sails. The vessel is hull down, but the tiers of canvas lift up, one after the other: skysails, royals, topgallantsails, topsails, mainsails, and at last, the woodwork. Then gleaming ports, then streaming water flashed from a curved bow. A good ship, but she flies the *tricolore*. This is no wedding barge, there is no winged lion on that flag. There is no music, no choir singing hymns. Men run to and fro in San Nicolo Fort, peering through spy-glasses. Ah, she will observe the rules, the skysails come down, then the royals — but why in thunder do not the topgallantsails follow? The fellow is coming right under the fort. Guns. He salutes. Answer from the fort. Citizen Lallemont has agreed that no French vessel shall enter the port, even the English do not attempt it. But the son of a dog comes on. Send out boats, Comandatore Pizamano. *Per Dio*, he is passing them! Touch off the cannon as a warning. One shot. Two. Some one is on the poop with a speaking-trumpet. "What ship is that?" "*Le Libérateur d'Italie. Le Capitaine Laugier. Marine de la République Française.*" "It is forbidden to enter the port, *Signor Capitano Laugier.*" "We intend to anchor outside." Do you! Then why not clew up those damned topgallantsails. My God! She is past the fort. She has slipped through the entrance; she is in the Lagoon. Her forefoot cuts the diamond water, she sheers her way through the calm colour reflection, her bow points straight at the rose and violet city swimming under the light clouds of early afternoon. Shock! Shiver! Foul of a Venetian galley, by all that's holy. What beastly seamanship! The Venetians

will not stand it, I tell you. Pop! Pop! Those are muskets, drop on them with cutlasses, *mes enfants*. Chop into the cursed foreigners. "*Non vogliamo forestieri qui.*" Boom! The cannon of Fort Sant' Andrea. Good guns, well pointed, the smoke from them draws a shade over the water. Down come the topgallantsails. You have paid a price for your entrance, Captain Laugier, but it is not enough. "*Viva San Marco!*" Detestable voices, these Venetians. That cry is confusing. Puff! The smoke goes by. Three marines have fallen. The cannon fire at intervals of two minutes. Hot work under a burning sky. Hot work on a burning deck. The smoothness of the water is flecked with bits of wood. A dead body rolls overboard, and bobs up and down beside the ships. A sailor slips from a yard, and is spiked on an upturned bayonet. Over the water comes the pealing of many bells. Captain Laugier is dead, and the city tolls his requiem. Strike your colours, beaten Frenchmen. Bronze cannot walk upon the sea. You have failed and succeeded, for upon your Captain's fallen body the bronze feet have found their bridge. Do you rejoice, old Arsenal? A captive ship towed up to you again! Ah, the cannon fring has brought the rain. Yes, and thunder too, and in the thunder a voice of bronze. The *Bucentoro* will not take the water this year. Cover up the brasses, *Arsenalotti*. Ascension Day is nothing to Venice now.

Yesterday this was matter for rejoicing, but to-day . . . Get the best rowers, order relays of horses on the mainland, post hot foot to the Commissioners at Grätz. One ship is nothing, but if they send twenty! What has the bronze General already said to the Commissioners? The Senate wonders, and wears itself out in speculation. They will give money, they will plunder the pockets of the populace to save Venice. Can a child save his toys when manhood is upon him? The century is old, already another lies in its arms. Month by month a new moon rises over Venice, but century by century! They cannot see, these Senators. They cannot hear the General cutting the Commissioners short in a sort of fury. "I wish no more Inqui-

sition, no more Senate. I will be an Attila for Venice. This government is old; it must fall!" Pretty words from bronze to porcelain. A stain on a brave, new gospel. "Save Venice," the letter urges, and the Commissioners depart for Trieste. But the doors are locked. The General blocks his entrances. "I cannot receive you, Gentlemen, you and your Senate are disgusting to the French blood." A pantomime before a temple, with a priest acting the part of chief comedian. Strange burlesque, arabesquing the characters of a creed. You think this man is a greedy conqueror. Go home, thinking. Your moment flutters off the calendar, your world dissolves and another takes its place. This is the cock-crow of ghosts. Slowly pass up the canal, slowly enter the Ducal Palace. Debate, everlastingly debate. And while you quibble the communication with the continent is cut.

He has declared war, the bronze General. What can be done? The little glass figures crack under the strain. Condulmer will not fight. Pesaro flees to Austria. So the measure awaits a vote. A grave Senate consulting a ballot-box as to whether it shall cut its throat. This is not suicide, but murder; this is not murder, but the turned leaf of an almanac. "Divide! Divide!" What is the writing on the other side? "*Viva la Liberté*," shouts General Salimbeni from a window. Stupid crowd, it will not give a cheer. It is queer what an unconscionable objection people have to dying. "*Viva San Marco!*" shouts General Salimbeni. Ah, now you hear! Such a racket, and the old lion flag hoisted everywhere. But that was a rash thing to do. It brings the crash. They fight, fight for old Saint Mark, they smash, burn, demolish. Who wore the *tricolore*? Plunder their houses. No you don't, no selling us to foreigners. They cannot read, the people, they do not see that the print has changed. By dint of cannon you can stop them. Stop them suddenly like a clock dropped from a wall.

Venice! Venice! The star-wakes gleam and shatter in your still canals, and the great horses pace forward, vigorous, un-

concerned, beautiful, treading your grief as they tread the passing winds.

The riot is over, but another may break out. A dead republic cannot control its citizens. General Baragney d'Hilliers is at Mestre. His dragoons will keep order. Shame, nobles and abdicated Senate! But can one blame the inactivity of the dead? French dragoons in little boats. The 5th and 63rd of the line proceeding to Venice in forty little boats. Grenadiers embarked for a funeral. Soldiers cracking jokes, and steady oar-strokes, warping them over the water toward Venice. A dark city, scarcely a lamp is lit. A match-spark slits the darkness, a drummer is lighting his pipe. Ah, there are walls ahead. The dull bones of the dead. Water swashes against marble. They are in the canal, their voices echo from doors and porches. Forty boats, and the bobble of them washes the water step and step above its usual height on the stairways. "*C'est une église ça!*" "*Mais, oui, Bête, tu pensais pourtant pas que tu entrerais en France. Nous sommes dans une sale ville aristocratique, et je m'en fiche, moi!*" Brave brigadier, spit into the canal, what else can a man of the new order do to show his enlightenment. Two regiments of seasoned soldiers, two regiments of free citizens, forty boat-loads of thinking men to goad a moribund nation into the millennium. The new century arriving with a flower in its button-hole, the *carmagnole* ousting the *furlana*. Perhaps — perhaps — but years pile up and then collapse. Will gaps start between one and another? Settle your gunstraps, 63rd of the line, we land here by the dim shine of a lantern held by a bombardier. Tier and tier the soldiers march through Venice. Their steps racket like the mallets of marble-cutters in the narrow *calli*, and the sound of them over bridges is the drum-beating of hard rain.

There are soldiers everywhere, Venice is stuffed with soldiers. They are at the Arsenal, on the Rialto, at San Stefano, and four hundred stack muskets, and hang their bearskins on the top of them, in the middle of the Piazza.

Golden horses, the sound of violins is

hushed, the pigeons who brush past you in the red and rising sunlight have just been perching on crossed bayonets. Set your faces to this army, advance toward them, paw the air over their heads. They do not observe you — yet. You are confounded with jewels, and leaves, and statues. You are a part of the great church, even though you stand poised to leave it, and already a sergeant has seen you. “*Tiens*,” says he, “*voilà les quatre chevaux d’or. Ah, mais ils sont magnifiques! Et quelle drôle d’idée de les avoir montés sur la Cathédrale.*”

The century wanes, the moon-century is gnawed and eaten, but the feet of the great horses stand upon its fragments, full-tilted to an arrested advance, and the green corroding on their sides is hidden in the glare of gold.

“For the honour and independence of the infant Cisalpine Republic, the affectionate and loving Republic of France orders and commands —”

What does she command? Precisely, that the new Government shall walk in solemn procession round the Piazza, and that a mass of thanksgiving shall be celebrated in Saint Mark’s Church and the image of the Virgin exposed to the rejoicing congregation. Who would have supposed that Venetians could be so dumb. The acclamations seem mostly in the French tongue. Never mind, it takes more than a day to translate a creed into a new language. Liberty is a great prize, good Venetians, although it must be admitted that she appears in disguise for the moment. She wears a mask, that is all, and you should be accustomed to masks. The soldiers bask in the warm sunshine, and doubtless the inhabitants bask in the sight of the soldiers, but they conceal their satisfaction very adroitly. Still, General Baraguay d’Hilliers has no doubt that it is there. This liberation of a free people is a famous exploit. He is a bit nettled at their apathy, for he has always heard that they were of a gay temperament. “*Sacré Bleu!* And we are giving them so much!”

Indeed, this giving is done with a magnificent generosity. It is exactly on Ascension Day that Bonaparte writes

from Montebello: “Conformably to your desire, Citizens, I have ordered the municipalities of Padua and Treviso to allow the passage of the foodstuffs necessary to the provisionment of the town of Venice.”

“Real and perpetual dominion,” and now a boatload of food is a condescension! Pink and purple water, your little ripples jest at these emblazoned palaces, your waves chuckle down the long Rivas, you reflect the new flag of Venice which even the Dey of Algiers refuses to respect, and patter your light heels upon it as on a dancing-floor. There will be no more use for the *Bucentoro*, of course. So rip off the gilding, pack up the mirrors, chop the timbers into firewood. This is good work for soldiers with nothing to do. There are other ships to be dismantled too, and some few seaworthy enough to send to the army at Corfu. But if they have taken away Ascension Day, the French will give Venice a new fête. Ah! and one so beautiful! Beat the drums, ring the church-bells, set up a Tree of Liberty in the Great Square, this fête is past telling. So writes the Citizen Arnault, from his room in the *Queen of England* inn. He bites his pen, he looks out on the little canal with its narrow bridge, he fusses with his watch-chain. It is not easy to write to the bronze General. He dips in the ink and starts again. “The people take no active part in what goes on here. They have seen the lions fall without making any sign of joy.” That certainly is queer. Perhaps Citizen Arnault did not hear that gondolier, who, when they chiselled out “*Pax tibi, Marce, evangelista meus*” on the lion’s book, and chiselled in “*Diritti dell’ uomo e del cittadino*,” exclaimed: “The lion has turned over a new leaf.” Does that sound like grief? Certainly not, think the French soldiers, and yet the Doge’s robes, the Golden Book, burn in silence, until a corporal strikes up the “*Marseillaise*.” They make a grand blaze too; why, the boatmen far off in the hazy Lagoon can hear the crackle of it snapping over the water. Then the columns! The columns produce a lovely effect, one all wound with *tricolore* flags and with this inscription: “To the French, regenerators of

Italy, Venice grateful," on its front, and on the back, "Bonaparte." The other is not so gay, but most proper and desirable. It is hung with crêpe, and the letters read: "To the shade of the victim of oligarchy, Venice sorrowful," and, "Laugier." To be sure there has been considerable excitement, and the great green lion has been thrown down and shattered in at least eighty fragments, but the soldiers did it. The populace were simply stolid and staring. Citizen Arnault fidgets in his chair. But other affairs march better. He has found the only copy of Anacharsis which is known to be in Venice; he is going to hunt for Homer, for he wants to put it with the Ossian of Cesarotti which he has already taken from the Library. Here his pen runs rapidly, he has an inspiration. "There are four superb horses which the Venetians took when, in company with the French, they sacked Constantinople. These horses are placed over the portal of the Ducal Church. Have not the French some right to claim them, or at least to accept them of Venetian gratitude?" The bronze General has an eye to a man, witness this really excellent plan. Fold your letter, Citizen. Press your fob down upon the seal. You may feel proud as you ring for candles, no one will have hurt Venice more than you.

The blue night softens the broken top of the column in the Piazzetta where it juts against the sky. The violet night sifts shadows over the white, mounting angels of Saint Mark's Church; it throws an aureole of lilac over the star of Christ and melts it into the glimmering dome behind. But upon the horses it clashes with the glitter of steel. Blue striking gold, and together producing a white-heart fire. Cold, as in great fire, hard as in new-kindled fire, outlined as behind a flame which folds back upon itself in lack of fuel, the great horses stand. They strain forward, they recoil even when starting, they raise one foot and hold it lifted, and all about them the stones of the jewelled church writhe, and convolute, and glisten, and dash the foam of their tendrils against the clear curve of the moulded flanks.

The Treaty of Campo Formio! A mask stripped off a Carnival figure, and behold, the sneering face of death! What of the creed the French were bringing the Venetians! Was it greed after all, or has a seed been sown? If so, the flowering will be long delayed. The French are leaving us, and almost we wish they would remain. For Austria! What does it matter that the *Bucentoro* is broken up; the lions from the *Piracus* loaded into a vessel; books, parchments, pictures, packed in travelling cases! What does anything matter! A gondolier snaps his fingers: "*Francesse non tutti ladri, ma Buona-partel*" Hush, my friend, that is a dangerous remark, for Madame Bonaparte has descended upon Venice in a whirlwind of laughter, might have made friends had she not been received in an overturned storehouse. But she stays only three days, and the song of the gondoliers who row her away can scarcely be heard for the hammering they make, putting up an immense scaffolding in front of Saint Mark's Church. They have erected poles too, and tackle. It is an awful nuisance, for soldiers are not skilled in carpenter work, and no Venetian will lend a hand. A grand ship sails for Toulon as soon as the horses are on board.

Golden horses, at last you leave your pedestals, you swing in the blue-and-silver air, you paw the reflections flung by rippled water, and the starved pigeons whirl about you chattering. One — one — one — one! The tackle creaks, the little squeaks of the pigeons are sharp and pitiful. A gash in the front of the great Church. A blank window framing nothing. The leaves of the sculptures curl, the swirling angels mount steadily, the star of Christ is the pointed jet of a flame, but the horses drop — drop — They descend slowly, they jerk, and stop, and start again, and one — one — one — one — they touch the pavement. Women throw shawls over their heads and weep; men pull off their caps and mutter prayers and imprecations. Then silently they form into a procession and march after the hand-carts, down to the quay, down to the waiting vessel. Slow feet following to a grave. Here is a sign, but hardly of joy. This is a march of mourn-

ing. Depart, vessel, draw out over the bright Lagoon, grow faint, vague, blur and disappear. The murder is accomplished. To-morrow come the Austrians.

BONFIRES BURN PURPLE

Then the energy which peoples the Earth crystallized into a single man. And this man was Water, and Fire, and Flesh. His core had the strength of metal, and the hardness of metal was in his actions, and upon him the sun struck as upon polished metal. So he went to and fro among the nations, gleaming as with jewels. Of himself were the monuments he erected, and his laws were engraved tablets of fairest bronze. But there grew a great terror among the lesser peoples of the Earth, and they ran hither and yon like the ants, they swarmed like beetles, and they saw themselves impotent, merely making tracks in sand. Now as speed is heat, so did this man soften with the haste of his going. For Fire is supreme even over metal, and the Fire in him overcame the strong metal, so that his limbs failed, and his brain was hot and molten. Then was he consumed, but those of his monuments which harboured not Fire, and were without spirit, and cold, these endured. In the midst of leaping flame, they kept their semblances, and turning many colours in heat, still they cooled as the Fire cooled. For metal is unassailable from without, only a spark in the mid-most circle can force a double action which pours it into Water, and volatilizes it into Air, and sifts it to ashes which are Earth. For man can fashion effigies, but the spark of Life he can neither infuse nor control.

As a sharp sun this man passed across his century, and of the cenotaphs of his burning, some remain as a shadow of splendour in the streets of his city, but others have returned whence he gathered them, for the years of these are many and the touch of kings upon them is as the dropping of particles of dust.

VENICE AGAIN

Sunday evening, May 23, 1915. A beautiful Sunday evening with the

Lagoon just going purple, and the angel on the tip of the new Campanile dissolved to a spurt of crocus-coloured flame. Up into the plum-green sky mount the angels of the Basilica of Saint Mark, their wings, curved up and feathered to the fragility of a blowing leaf, making incisive stabs of whiteness against the sky.

An organ moans in the great nave, and the high voices of choristers float out through the open door and surge down the long Piazza. The chugging of a motor-boat breaks into the chant, swirls it, churns upon it, and fades to a distant pulsing down the Grand Canal. The Campanile angel goes suddenly crimson, pales to rose, dies out in lilac, and remains dark, almost invisible, until the starting of stars behind it gives it a new solidity in hiding them.

In the warm twilight, the little white tables of the Café Florian are like petals dropped from the rose of the moon. For a moment they are weird and magical, but the abrupt glare of electric lights touches them back into mere tables; mere tables, flecked with coffee-cups and liqueur-glasses; mere tables, crumpling the lower halves of newspapers with their hard edges; mere tables, where gesticulating arms rest their elbows, and ice-cream plates nearly meet disaster in the excitement of a heated discussion. Venice discusses. What will the Government do? Austria has asked that her troops might cross over Italian territory, South of Switzerland, in order to attack the French frontier. Austrian "I tell you, Luigi, that alliance the Government made with the Central Powers was a ghastly blunder. You could never have got Italians to fight on the side of Austrians. Blood is thicker than ink, fortunately. But we are ready, thanks to Commandante Cadorna. It was a foregone conclusion, ever since we refused passage to their troops." "I saw Signor Colsanto, yesterday. He told me that the order had come from the General Board of Antiquities and Fine Arts to remove everything possible to Rome, and protect what can't be moved. He begins the work to-morrow." "He does! Well, that tells us. Here, Boy, Boy, give me a paper. Listen to that roar! There you are, *cinque centesimi*."

Well, we're off, Luigi. It's declared. Italy at war with Austria again. Thank God, we've wiped off the stain of that abominable treaty." With heads bared, the crowd stands, and shouts, and cheers, and the pigeons flee away in frightened circles to the sculptured porticoes of the Basilica. The crowd bursts into a sweeping song. A great patriotic chorus. It echoes from side to side of the Piazza, it runs down the colonnades of the Procuratie like a splashing tide, it dashes upon the arched portals of Saint Mark's and flicks upward in jets of broken music. Wild, shooting, rolling music; vibrant, solemn, dedicated music; throbbing music flung out of loud-pounding hearts. The Piazza holds the sound of it and lifts it up as one raises an offering before an altar. Higher — higher — the song is lifted, it engulfs the four golden horses over the centre door of the church. The horses are as brazen cymbals crashing back the great song in a cadence of struck metal, the carved capitals are fluted reeds to this mighty anthem, the architraves bandy it to and fro in revolving canons of harmony. Up, up, spires the song, and the mounting angels call it to one another in an ascending scale even to the star of fire on the topmost pinnacle which is the Christ, even into the distant sky where it curves up and over falling down to the four horizons, to the highest point of the aconite-blue sky, the sky of the Kingdom of Italy.

Garibaldi's Hymn! For war is declared and Italy has joined the Allies!

Soft night falling upon Venice. Summer night over the moon-city, the flower-city. *Fiore di Mare!* Garden of lights in the midst of dark waters, your star-blossoms will be quenched, the strings of your guitars will snap and slacken. Nights, you will gird on strange armour, and grow loud and strident. But now — The gilded horses shimmer above the portico of Saint Mark's! How still they are, and powerful. Pride, motion, activity set in a frozen patience.

Suddenly — Boom! A signal gun. Then immediately the shrill shriek of a steam whistle, and another, and whistles

and whistles, from factories and boats, yawling, snarling, mewling, screeching, a cracked cacophony of horror.

Minutes — one — two — three — and the batteries of the Aerial-Guard Station begin to fire. Shells — red and black, white and grey — bellow, snap, and crash into the blue-black sky. A whirr — the Italian planes are rising. Their white centre lights throw a halo about them, and, tip and tip, a red light and a green, spark out to a great spread, closing together as the planes gain in altitude. Up they go, the red, white, and green circles underneath their wings and on either side of the fan-tails bright in the glow of the white centre light. Up, up, slanting in mounting circles. "Holy Mother of God! What is it?" Taubes over the city, flying at a great height, flying in a wedge like a flight of wild geese. Boom! The anti-aircraft guns are flinging up strings of luminous balls. Range 10,000 feet, try 10,500. Loud detonations, echoing far over the Lagoon. The navigation lights of the Italian planes are a faint triangle of bright dots. They climb in deliberate spirals, up and up, up and up. They seem to hang. They hover without direction. Ah, there are the Taubes, specks dotting the beam of a search-light. One of them is banking. Two Italian machines dart up over him. He spins, round — round — top-whirling, sleeping in speed, to us below he seems stationary. Pup-pup-pup-pup-pup — machine-guns, clicking like distant typewriters, firing with indescribable rapidity. The Italian planes drop signal balloons, they hang in the air like suspended sky-rockets, they float down, amber balls, steadily burning. The ground guns answer, and white buds of smoke appear in the sky. They seem to blossom out of darkness, silver roses beyond the silver shaft of the search-light. The air is broken with noise: thunder-drumming of cannon, sharp pocking of machine-guns, snap and crack of rifles. Above, the specks loop, and glide, and zizzag. The spinning Taube nose-dives.

red with stinging shrapnel. Two machines charge head on, the Taube swerves and rams the right wing of the Nicuport. Mamel! Flame leaping and dropping. A smear from zenith to — following it, the eye hits the shadow of a roof. Blackness. One poor devil gone, and the attacking plane is still airworthy though damaged. It wobbles out of the search-light and disappears, rocking. Two Taubes shake themselves free of the tangle, they glide down — down — all round them are ribbons of "flaming onions," they avoid them and pass on down, close over the city, unscathed, so close you can see the black crosses on their wings with a glass. Rifles crack at them from roofs. Pooht! You might as well try to stop them with pea-shooters. They curve, turn, and hang up-wind. Small shells beat about them with a report like twanged harp-strings. "*Klar zum Werfen?*" "*Jahwol.*" "*Gut doch, werfen.*" Words cannot carry down thousands of feet, but the ominous hovering is a sort of speech. People wring their hands and clutch their throats, some cover their ears. Z-z-z-z-z! That whine would pierce any covering. The bomb has passed below the roofs. Nothing. A pause. Then a report, breaking the hearing, leaving only the apprehension of a great light and no sound. They have hit us! *Misericordial*! They have hit Venice. One — two — four — ten bombs. People sob and pray, the water lashes the Rivas as though there were a storm. Another machine falls, shooting down in silence. It is not on fire, it merely falls. Then slowly the Taubes draw off. The search-light shifts, seeking them. The gun-fire is spaced more widely. Field-glasses fail to show even a speck. There is silence. The silence of a pulse which has stopped. But the people walk in the brightness of fire. Fire from the Rio della Tanna, from the Rio del Carmine, from the quarter of Santa Lucia. Bells peal in a fury, fire-boats hurry with forced engines along the canals. Water streams jet upon the fire; and, in the golden light, the glittering horses of Saint Mark's pace forward, silent, calm, determined in their advance, above the portal of the untouched church.

The night turns grey, and silver, and opens into a blue morning. Diamond roses sparkle on the Lagoon, but the people passing quickly through the Piazza are grim, and workmen sniff the smoky air as they fix ladders and arrange tools. Venice has tasted war. "*Evviva Italia!*"

City of soft colours, of amber and violet, you are turning grey-green, and grey-green are the uniforms of the troops who defend you. The Bersaglièri still wear their cocks' feathers, but they are green too, and black. Black as the guns mounted on pontoons among the Lagoons before Venice, green as the bundles of reeds camouflaging them from Austrian observation balloons. Drag up metre after metre of grey-green cloth, stretch it over the five golden domes of Saint Mark's Basilica. Hood their splendour in umbrella bags of cloth, so that not one glint shall answer the mocking shimmer of the moon. Barrows and barrows of nails for the wooden bastion of the Basilica, hods and hods of mortar and narrow bricks to cover the old mosaics of the lunettes. Cart-loads of tar and plank-ing, and heaps, heaps, hills and mountains of sand — the Lido protecting Venice, as it has done for hundreds of years. They shovel sand, scoop sand, pour sand, into bags and bags and bags. Thousands of bags piled against the bases of columns, rising in front of carved corners, blotting out altars, throttling the open points of arches. Porphyries, malachites, and jades are squarely boarded, pulpits and fonts disappear in swaddling bands. Why? The battle front is forty miles away in Friuli, and Venice is not a fortified town. Why? Answer, Reims! Bear witness, Ypres! Do they cover Venice without reason? Nietzsche was a German, still I believe they read him in Vienna. Blood and Iron! And is there not also Blood and Stone, Blood and Bronze, Blood and Canvas? "*Kultur,*" Venetians, in the Rio del Carmine; there is no time to lose. Take down the great ceiling pictures in the Ducal Palace and wrap them on cylinders. Build a high trestle, and fashion little go-carts which draw with string.

Hush! They are coming — the four

beautiful horses. They rise in a whirl of disturbed pigeons. They float and descend. The people watch in silence as, one after another, they reach the ground. Across the tiles they step at last, each pulled in a go-cart; merry-go-round horses, detached and solitary, one foot raised, tramp over chequered stones, over chequered centuries. The merry-go-round of years has brought them full circle, for are they not returning to Rome?

For how long? Ask the guns embedded in the snow of glaciers; ask the rivers pierced from their beds, overflowing marshes and meadows, forming a new sea. Seek the answer in the faces of the Grenatieri Brigade, dying to a man, but halting the invaders. Demand it of the women and children fleeing the approach of a bitter army. Provoke the reply in the dryness of those eyes which gaze upon the wreck of Tiepolo's ceiling in the Church of the Scalzi. Yet not in

Italy alone shall you find it. The ring of searching must be widened, and France, England, Japan, and America, caught within its edge. Moons and moons, and seas seamed with vessels. Needles stitching the cloth of peace to choke the cannon of war.

The boat draws away from the Riva. The great bronze horses mingle their outlines with the distant mountains. Dim gold, subdued green-gold, flashing faintly to the faint, bright peaks above them. Granite and metal, earth over water. Down the canal, old, beautiful horses, pride of Venice, of Constantinople, of Rome. Wars bite you with their little flames and pass away, but roses and oleanders strew their petals before your going, and you move like a constellation in a space of crimson stars.

So the horses float along the canal, between barred and shuttered palaces, splendid against marble walls in the fire of the sun.

PICTURES OF THE FLOATING WORLD

LACQUER PRINTS

STREETS

(ADAPTED FROM THE POET
YAKURA SANJIN, 1769)

As I wandered through the eight hundred and eight streets of the city,
I saw nothing so beautiful
As the Women of the Green Houses,
With their girdles of spun gold,
And their long-sleeved dresses,
Coloured like the graining of wood.
As they walk,
The hems of their outer garments flutter open,
And the blood-red linings glow like sharp-toothed maple leaves
In Autumn.

BY MESSENGER

One night
When there was a clear moon,
I sat down
To write a poem
About maple-trees.
But the dazzle of moonlight
In the ink
Blinded me,
And I could only write
What I remembered.
Therefore, on the wrapping of my poem
I have inscribed your name.

CIRCUMSTANCE

Upon the maple leaves
The dew shines red,
But on the lotus blossom
It has the pale transparency of tears.

ANGLES

The rain is dark against the white sky,
Or white against the foliage of eucalyptus-trees.

But, in the cistern, it is a sheet of mauve
and amber,
Because of the chrysanthemums
Heaped about its edge.

VICARIOUS

When I stand under the willow-tree
Above the river,
In my straw-coloured silken garment
Embroidered with purple chrysanthemums,
It is not at the bright water
That I am gazing,
But at your portrait,
Which I have caused to be painted
On my fan.

NEAR KIOTO

As I crossed over the bridge of Ariwarano Narikira,
I saw that the waters were purple
With the floating leaves of maples.

DESOLATION

Under the plum-blossoms are nightingales;
But the sea is hidden in an egg-white mist,
And they are silent.

YOSHIWARA LAMENT

Golden peacocks
Under blossoming cherry-trees,
But on all the wide sea
There is no boat.

SUNSHINE

The pool is edged with the blade-like leaves of irises.
If I throw a stone into the placid water,

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But on all the wide sea
There is no boat.

SUNSHINE

The pool is edged with the blade-like leaves of irises.
If I throw a stone into the placid water,

It suddenly stiffens
 Into rings and rings
 Of sharp gold wire.

ILLUSION

Walking beside the tree-peonies,
 I saw a beetle
 Whose wings were of black lacquer
 spotted with milk.
 I would have caught it,
 But it ran from me swiftly
 And hid under the stone lotus
 Which supports the statue of Buddha.

A YEAR PASSES

Beyond the porcelain fence of the pleas-
 ure garden,
 I hear the frogs in the blue-green rice-
 fields;
 But the sword-shaped moon
 Has cut my heart in two.

A LOVER

If I could catch the green lantern of the
 firefly
 I could see to write you a letter.

TO A HUSBAND

Brighter than fireflies upon the Uji River
 Are your words in the dark, Beloved.

THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE

When I am alone,
 The wind in the pine-trees
 Is like the shuffling of waves
 Upon the wooden sides of a boat.

FROM CHINA

I thought: —
 The moon,
 Shining upon the many steps of the
 palace before me,
 Shines also upon the chequered rice-
 fields
 Of my native land.
 And my tears fell
 Like white rice grains
 At my feet.

THE POND

Cold, wet leaves
 Floating on moss-coloured water,

And the croaking of frogs —
 Cracked bell-notes in the twilight.

AUTUMN

All day I have watched the purple vine
 leaves
 Fall into the water.
 And now in the moonlight they still fall,
 But each leaf is fringed with silver.

EPHEMERA

Silver-green lanterns tossing among windy
 branches:
 So an old man thinks
 Of the loves of his youth.

DOCUMENT

The great painter, Hokusai,
 In his old age,
 Wrote these words:
 "Profiting by a beautiful Spring day,
 In this year of tranquillity,
 To warm myself in the sun,
 I received a visit from my publisher
 Who asked me to do something for
 him.
 Then I reflected that one should not
 forget the glory of arms,
 Above all when one was living in
 peace;
 And in spite of my age,
 Which is more than seventy years,
 I have found courage to draw those
 ancient heroes
 Who have been the models of glory."

THE EMPEROR'S GARDEN

Once, in the sultry heats of Midsummer,
 An Emperor caused the miniature moun-
 tains in his garden
 To be covered with white silk,
 That so crowned
 They might cool his eyes
 With the sparkle of snow.

ONE OF THE "HUNDRED VIEWS
 OF FUJI" BY HOKUSAI

Being thirsty,
 I filled a cup with water,
 And, behold! Fuji-yama lay upon the
 water
 Like a dropped leaf!

DISILLUSION

A scholar,
 Weary of erecting the fragile towers of
 words,
 Went on a pilgrimage to Asama-yama.
 And seeing the force of the fire
 Spouting from this mighty mountain,
 Hurling himself into its crater
 And perished.

PAPER FISHES

The paper carp,
 At the end of its long bamboo pole,
 Takes the wind into its mouth
 And emits it at its tail.
 So is man,
 Forever swallowing the wind.

MEDITATION

A wise man,
 Watching the stars pass across the sky,
 Remarked:
 In the upper air the fireflies move more
 slowly.

THE CAMELLIA TREE
OF MATSUE

At Matsue,
 There was a Camellia Tree of great
 beauty
 Whose blossoms were white as honey wax
 Splashed and streaked with the pink of
 fair coral.
 At night,
 When the moon rose in the sky,
 The Camellia Tree would leave its place
 By the gateway,
 And wander up and down the garden,
 Trailing its roots behind it
 Like a train of rustling silk.
 The people in the house,
 Hearing the scrape of them upon the
 gravel,
 Looked out into the garden
 And saw the tree,
 With its flowers erect and peering,
 Pressed against the shōji.
 Many nights the tree walked about the
 garden,
 Until the women and children
 Became frightened,
 And the Master of the house

Ordered that it be cut down.
 But when the gardener brought his axe
 And struck at the trunk of the tree,
 There spouted forth a stream of dark
 blood;
 And when the stump was torn up,
 The hole quivered like an open wound.

SUPERSTITION

I have painted a picture of a ghost
 Upon my kite,
 And hung it on a tree.
 Later, when I loose the string
 And let it fly,
 The people will cower
 And hide their heads,
 For fear of the God
 Swimming in the clouds.

THE RETURN

Coming up from my boat
 In haste to lighten your anxiety,
 I saw, reflected in the circular metal
 mirror,
 The face and hands of a woman
 Arranging her hair.

A LADY TO HER LOVER

The white snows of Winter
 Follow the falling of leaves;
 Therefore
 I have had your portrait cut
 In snow-white jade.

NUANCE

Even the iris bends
 When a butterfly lights upon it.

AUTUMN HAZE

Is it a dragonfly or a maple leaf
 That settles softly down upon the water?

PEACE

Perched upon the muzzle of a cannon
 A yellow butterfly is slowly opening and
 shutting its wings.

IN TIME OF WAR

Across the newly-plastered wall,
The darting of red dragonflies
Is like the shooting
Of blood-tipped arrows.

NUIT BLANCHE

The chirping of crickets in the night
Is intermittent,
Like the twinkling of stars.

SPRING DAWN

He wore a coat
With gold and red maple leaves,
He was girt with the two swords,
He carried a peony lantern.
When I awoke,
There was only the blue shadow of the
plum-tree
Upon the shōji.

POETRY

Over the shop where silk is sold
Still the dragon kites are flying.

FROM A WINDOW

Your footfalls on the drum bridge beside
my house
Are like the pattering drops of a passing
shower,
So soon are they gone.

AGAIN THE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

I have drunk your health
In the red-lacquer wine cups,
But the wind-bells on the bronze lan-
terns
In my garden
Are corroded and fallen.

TIME

Looking at myself in my metal mirror,
I saw, faintly outlined,
The figure of a crane
Engraved upon its back.

LEGEND

When the leaves of the cassia-tree
Turn red in Autumn,

Then the moon,
In which it grows,
Shines for many nights
More brightly.

PILGRIMS ASCENDING FUJI-YAMA

I should tremble at the falling showers
of ashes
Dislodged by my feet,
Did I not know
That at night they fly upward
And spread themselves once more
Upon the slopes of the Honourable
Mountain.

THE KAGOES OF A RETURNING TRAVELLER

Diagonally between the cryptomerias,
What I took for the flapping of wings
Was the beating feet of your runners,
O my Lord!

A STREET

Under red umbrellas with cream-white
centres,
A procession of Geisha passes
In front of the silk-shop of Matsuzaka-ya.

OUTSIDE A GATE

On the floor of the empty palanquin
The plum-petals constantly increase.

ROAD TO THE YOSHIWARA

Coming to you along the Nihon Em-
bankment,
Suddenly the road was darkened
By a flock of wild geese
Crossing the moon.

OX STREET, TAKANAWA

What is a rainbow?
Have I not seen its colours and its shape
Duplicated in the melon slices
Lying beside an empty cart?

A DAIMIO'S OIRAN

When I hear your runners shouting:
"Get down! Get down!"
Then I dress my hair
With the little chrysanthemums.

PASSING THE BAMBOO FENCE

What fell upon my open umbrella —
A plum-blossom?

FROSTY EVENING

It is not the bright light in your window
Which dazzles my eyes;
It is the dim outline of your shadow
Moving upon the shōji.

AN ARTIST ✓

The anchorite, Kisen,
Composed a thousand poems
And threw nine hundred and ninety-
nine into the river
Finding one alone worthy of preserva-
tion.

A BURNT OFFERING

Because there was no wind,
The smoke of your letters hung in the
air
For a long time;
And its shape
Was the shape of your face,
My Beloved.

DAYBREAK. YOSHIWARA

Draw your hoods tightly,
You who must depart,
The morning mist
Is grey and miasmic.

TEMPLE CEREMONY

(FROM THE JAPANESE OF Sōjō HENJŌ)

Blow softly,
O Wind!
And let no clouds cover the moon
Which lights the posturing steps
Of the most beautiful of dancers.

TWO PORTERS RETURNING
ALONG A COUNTRY ROAD

Since an empty kago can be carried upon
the back of one man,
Therefore the other has nothing to do

But gaze at the white circle
Drawn about the flying moon.

STORM BY THE SEASHORE

There is no moon in the sky,
But with each step
I see one grow in the sand
Under my feet.
This interests me so much
That I forget the rain
Beating against the lantern
Which my cloak only partially covers.

THE EXILED EMPEROR

The birds sing to-day,
For to-morrow they will be flown
Many miles across the tossing sea.

LETTER WRITTEN FROM PRISON
BY TWO POLITICAL OFFENDERS

When a hero fails of his purpose,
His acts are regarded as those of a vil-
lain and a robber.
Pursuing liberty, suddenly our plans are
defeated.
In public we have been seized and pin-
ioned and caged for many days.
How can we find exit from this place?
Weeping, we seem as fools; laughing, as
rogues.
Alas! for us; we can only be silent.

MOON HAZE

Because the moonlight deceives
Therefore I love it.

PROPORTION

In the sky there is a moon and stars,
And in my garden there are yellow moths
Fluttering about a white azalea bush.

CONSTANCY

Although so many years,
Still the vows we made each other
Remain tied to the great trunk
Of the seven separate trees
In the courtyard of the Crimson Temple
At Nara.

CHINOISERIES

REFLECTIONS

When I looked into your eyes,
 I saw a garden
 With peonies, and tinkling pagodas,
 And round-arched bridges
 Over still lakes.
 A woman sat beside the water
 In a rain-blue, silken garment.
 She reached through the water
 To pluck the crimson peonies
 Beneath the surface,
 But as she grasped the stems,
 They jarred and broke into white-green
 ripples;
 And as she drew out her hand,
 The water-drops dripping from it
 Stained her rain-blue dress like tears.

FALLING SNOW

The snow whispers about me,
 And my wooden clogs
 Leave holes behind me in the snow.
 But no one will pass this way
 Seeking my footsteps,
 And when the temple bell rings again
 They will be covered and gone.

HOAR-FROST

In the cloud-grey mornings
 I heard the herons flying;
 And when I came into my garden,
 My silken outer-garment
 Trailed over withered leaves.
 A dried leaf crumbles at a touch,
 But I have seen many Autumns
 With herons blowing like smoke
 Across the sky.

GOLD-LEAF SCREEN

Under the broken clouds of dawn,
 The white leopards eat the grapes
 In my vineyard.
 And in the sunken splendour of twilight,
 The ring pheasants perch among the red
 fruit
 Of my pomegranate trees.
 The bright coloured varnish

Scales off the wheels of my chariots,
 For the horses which should draw them
 Have gone Northward in a gloom of
 spears.

My stablemen march,
 Each with a two-edged spear upon his
 shoulder,
 And my orchard tenders have put on the
 green feathered helmets
 And girt themselves with black bows.
 I stand above the terrace of three hun-
 dred rose-trees
 And gaze at my despoiled vineyards.
 Drums beat among the Northern hills,
 But I hear only the rattle of the wind
 on the chipped tiles
 Of my roof.

A thousand little stitches in the soul of
 a dead man —
 Still one can enjoy these things
 Sitting over a fire of camphor wood
 In a quilted gown of purple-red silk.

A POET'S WIFE

CHO WEN-CHÜN TO HER HUSBAND
 SSÜ-MA HSIANG-JU

You have taken our love and turned it
 into coins of silver.
 You sell the love poems you wrote for
 me,
 And with the price of them you buy
 many cups of wine,
 I beg that you remain dumb,
 That you write no more poems.
 For the wine does us both an injury,
 And the words of your heart
 Have become the common speech of the
 Emperor's concubines.

SPRING LONGING

The South wind blows open the folds
 of my dress,
 My feet leave wet tracks in the earth
 of my garden,
 The willows along the canal sing
 with new leaves turned upon the
 wind.

I walk along the tow-path
Gazing at the level water.
Should I see a ribbed edge
Running upon its clearness,
I should know that this was caused
By the prow of the boat
In which you are to return.

LI T'AI PO

So, Master, the wine gave you something,
I suppose.

I think I see you,
Your silks all disarranged,
Lolling in a green-marble pavilion,
Ogling the concubines of the Emperor's
Court

Who pass the door
In yellow coats, and white jade ear-drops,
Their hair pleated in folds like the hun-
dred clouds.

I watch you,
Hiccoughing poetry between drinks,
Sinking as the sun sinks,
Sleeping for twenty-four hours,
While they peek at you,
Giggling,
Through the open door.

You found something in the wine,
I imagine,
Since you could not leave it,
Even when, after years of wandering,
You sat in the boat with one sail,
Travelling down the zigzag rivers
On your way back to Court.

You had a dream,
I conjecture.
You saw something under the willow-
lights of the water
Which swept you to dizziness,
So that you toppled over the edge of the
boat,
And gasped, and became your dream.

Twelve hundred years
Or thereabouts,
Did the wine do it?
I would sit in the purple moonlight
And drink three hundred cups,
If I believed it.
Three hundred full cups,
After your excellent fashion,
While in front of me
The river dazzle ran before the moon,
And the light flaws of the evening wind
Scattered the notes of nightingales
Loosely among the kuai trees.

They erected a temple to you:
"Great Doctor,
Prince of Poetry,
Immortal man who loved drink."
I detest wine,
And I have no desire for the temple,
Which under the circumstances
Is fortunate.
But I would sacrifice even sobriety
If, when I was thoroughly drunk,
I could see what you saw
Under the willow-clouded water,
The day you died.

PLANES OF PERSONALITY

Two Speak Together

VERNAL EQUINOX

The scent of hyacinths, like a pale mist,
lies between me and my book;
And the South Wind, washing through
the room,
Makes the candles quiver.
My nerves sting at a spatter of rain on
the shutter,
And I am uneasy with the thrusting of
green shoots
Outside, in the night.

Why are you not here to overpower me
with your tense and urgent love?

THE LETTER

Little cramped words scrawling all over
the paper
Like dragged fly's legs,
What can you tell of the flaring moon
Through the oak leaves?
Or of my uncurtained window and the
bare floor

Spattered with moonlight?
 Your silly quirks and twists have nothing
 in them
 Of blossoming hawthorns,
 And this paper is dull, crisp, smooth,
 virgin of loveliness
 Beneath my hand.

I am tired, Beloved, of chafing my heart
 against
 The want of you;
 Of squeezing it into little inkdrops,
 And posting it.
 And I scald alone, here, under the fire
 Of the great moon.

MISE EN SCENE

When I think of you, Beloved,
 I see a smooth and stately garden
 With parterres of gold and crimson tulips
 And bursting lilac leaves.
 There is a low-lipped basin in the midst,
 Where a statue of veined cream marble
 Perpetually pours water over her shoulder
 From a rounded urn.
 When the wind blows,
 The water-stream blows before it
 And spatters into the basin with a light
 tinkling,
 And your shawl — the colour of red vio-
 lets —
 Flares out behind you in great curves
 Like the swirling draperies of a painted
 Madonna.

VENUS TRANSIENS

Tell me,
 Was Venus more beautiful
 Than you are,
 When she topped
 The crinkled waves,
 Drifting shoreward
 On her plaited shell?
 Was Botticelli's vision
 Fairer than mine;
 And were the painted rosebuds
 He tossed his lady,
 Of better worth
 Than the words I blow about you
 To cover your too great loveliness
 As with a gauze
 Of misted silver?
 For me,

You stand poised
 In the blue and buoyant air,
 Cinctured by bright winds,
 Treading the sunlight.
 And the waves which precede you
 Ripple and stir
 The sands at my feet.

MADONNA OF THE EVENING FLOWERS

All day long I have been working,
 Now I am tired.
 I call: "Where are you?"
 But there is only the oak-tree rustling in
 the wind.
 The house is very quiet,
 The sun shines in on your books,
 On your scissors and thimble just put
 down,
 But you are not there.
 Suddenly I am lonely:
 Where are you?
 I go about searching.

Then I see you,
 Standing under a spire of pale blue lark-
 spur,
 With a basket of roses on your arm.
 You are cool, like silver,
 And you smile.
 I think the Canterbury bells are playing
 little tunes.

You tell me that the peonies need spray-
 ing,
 That the columbines have overrun all
 bounds,
 That the pyrus japonica should be cut
 back and rounded.
 You tell me these things.
 But I look at you, heart of silver,
 White heart-flame of polished silver,
 Burning beneath the blue steeples of the
 larkspur,
 And I long to kneel instantly at your
 feet,
 While all about us peal the loud, sweet
Te Deums of the Canterbury bells.

BRIGHT SUNLIGHT

The wind has blown a corner of your
 shawl
 Into the fountain,

Where it floats and drifts
Among the lily-pads
Like a tissue of sapphires.
But you do not heed it.
Your fingers pick at the lichens
On the stone edge of the basin,
And your eyes follow the tall clouds
As they sail over the ilex-trees.

OMBRE CHINOISE

Red foxgloves against a yellow wall
streaked with plum-coloured shadows;
A lady with a blue and red sunshade;
The slow dash of waves upon a parapet.
That is all.
Non-existent — immortal —
As solid as the centre of a ring of fine
gold.

JULY MIDNIGHT

Fireflies flicker in the tops of trees,
Flicker in the lower branches,
Skim along the ground.
Over the moon-white lilies
Is a flashing and ceasing of small, lemon-
green stars.
As you lean against me,
Moon-white,
The air all about you
Is slit, and pricked, and pointed with
sparkles of lemon-green flame
Starting out of a background of vague,
blue trees.

WHEAT-IN-THE-EAR

You stand between the cedars and the
green spruces,
Brilliantly naked
And I think:
What are you,
A gem under sunlight?
A poised spear?
A jade cup?
You flash in front of the cedars and the
tall spruces,
And I see that you are fire —
Sacrificial fire on a jade altar,
Spear-tongue of white, ceremonial fire.
My eyes burn,
My hands are flames seeking you,
But you are as remote from me as a
bright pointed planet
Set in the distance of an evening sky.

THE WEATHER-COCK POINTS SOUTH

I put your leaves aside,
One by one:
The stiff, broad outer leaves;
The smaller ones,
Pleasant to touch, veined with purple;
The glazed inner leaves.
One by one
I parted you from your leaves,
Until you stood up like a white flower
Swaying slightly in the evening wind.

White flower,
Flower of wax, of jade, of unstreaked
agate;
Flower with surfaces of ice,
With shadows faintly crimson.
Where in all the garden is there such a
flower?
The stars crowd through the lilac leaves
To look at you.
The low moon brightens you with silver.

The bud is more than the calyx.
There is nothing to equal a white bud,
Of no colour, and of all,
Burnished by moonlight,
Thrust upon by a softly-swinging wind.

THE ARTIST

Why do you subdue yourself in golds and
purples?
Why do you dim yourself with folded
silks?
Do you not see that I can buy brocades
in any draper's shop,
And that I am choked in the twilight
of all these colours?
How pale you would be, and startling,
How quiet;
But your curves would spring upward
Like a clear jet of flung water,
You would quiver like a shot-up spray
of water,
You would waver, and relapse, and
tremble.
And I too should tremble,
Watching.

Murex-dyes and tinsel —
And yet I think I could bear your beauty
unshaded.

THE GARDEN BY MOONLIGHT

A black cat among roses,
 Phlox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter
 moon,
 The sweet smells of heliotrope and night-
 scented stock,
 The garden is very still,
 It is dazed with moonlight,
 Contented with perfume,
 Dreaming the opium dreams of its folded
 poppies.
 Firefly lights open and vanish
 High as the tip buds of the golden glow
 Low as the sweet alyssum flowers at my
 feet.
 Moon-shimmer on leaves and trellises,
 Moon-spikes shafting through the snow-
 ball bush.
 Only the little faces of the ladies' delight
 are alert and staring,
 Only the cat, padding between the roses,
 Shakes a branch and breaks the chequered
 pattern
 As water is broken by the falling of a
 leaf.
 Then you come,
 And you are quiet like the garden,
 And white like the alyssum flowers,
 And beautiful as the silent sparks of the
 fireflies.
 Ah, Beloved, do you see those orange
 lilies?
 They knew my mother,
 But who belonging to me will they know
 When I am gone.

INTERLUDE

When I have baked white cakes
 And grated green almonds to spread
 upon them;
 When I have picked the green crowns
 from the strawberries
 And piled them, cone-pointed, in a blue
 and yellow platter;
 When I have smoothed the seam of the
 linen I have been working;
 What then?
 To-morrow it will be the same:
 Cakes and strawberries,
 And needles in and out of cloth.
 If the sun is beautiful on bricks and
 pewter,
 How much more beautiful is the moon,

Slanting down the gauffered branches of
 a plum-tree;
 The moon,
 Wavering across a bed of tulips;
 The moon,
 Still,
 Upon your face.
 You shine, Beloved,
 You and the moon.
 But which is the reflection?
 The clock is striking eleven.
 I think, when we have shut and barred
 the door,
 The night will be dark
 Outside.

BULLION

My thoughts
 Chink against my ribs
 And roll about like silver hail-stones.
 I should like to spill them out,
 And pour them, all shining,
 Over you.
 But my heart is shut upon them
 And holds them straitly.

Come, You! and open my heart;
 That my thoughts torment me no longer,
 But glitter in your hair.

THE WHEEL OF THE SUN

I beg you
 Hide your face from me.
 Draw the tissue of your head-gear
 Over your eyes.
 For I am blinded by your beauty,
 And my heart is strained,
 And aches,
 Before you.

In the street,
 You spread a brightness where you walk,
 And I see your lifting silks
 And rejoice;
 But I cannot look up to your face.
 You melt my strength,
 And set my knees to trembling.
 Shadow yourself that I may love you,
 For now it is too great a pain.

A SHOWER

That sputter of rain, flipping the hedge-
 rows
 And making the highways hiss,

How I love it!
And the touch of you upon my arm
As you press against me that my umbrella
May cover you.

Tinkle of drops on stretched silk.
Wet murmur through green branches.

SUMMER RAIN

All night our room was outer-walled with
rain.
Drops fell and flattened on the tin roof,
And rang like little disks of metal.
Ping! — Ping! — and there was not a pin-
point of silence between them.
The rain rattled and clashed,
And the slats of the shutters danced and
glittered.
But to me the darkness was red-gold and
crocus-coloured
With your brightness,
And the words you whispered to me
Sprang up and flamed — orange torches
against the rain.
Torches against the wall of cool, silver
rain!

APRIL

A bird chirped at my window this morn-
ing,
And over the sky is drawn a light net-
work of clouds.
Come,
Let us go out into the open,
For my heart leaps like a fish that is
ready to spawn.

I will lie under the beech-trees,
Under the grey branches of the beech-
trees,
In a blueness of little squills and crocuses.
I will lie among the little squills
And be delivered of this overcharge of
beauty,
And that which is born shall be a joy to
you
Who love me.

COQ D'OR

I walked along a street at dawn in cold,
grey light,
Above me lines of windows watched,
gaunt, dull, drear.

The lamps were fading, and the sky was
streaked rose-red,
Silhouetting chimneys with their queer,
round pots.

My feet upon the pavement made a
knock — knock — knock.
Above the roofs of Westminster, Big Ben
struck.

The cocks on all the steeples crew in
clear, flat tones,
And churchyard daisies sprang away from
thin, bleak bones.

The golden trees were calling me:
"Come! Come! Come!"

The trees were fresh with daylight, and I
heard bees hum.

A cart trailed slowly down the street, its
load young greens.

They sparkled like blown emeralds, and
then I laughed.

A morning in the city with its upthrust
spires

All tipped with gold and shining in the
brisk, blue air,

But the gold is round my forehead and
the knot still holds

Where you tied it in the shadows, your
rose-gold hair.

THE CHARM

I lay them before you,
One, two, three silver pieces,
And a copper piece
Dulled with handling.
The first will buy you a cake,
The second a flower,
The third a coloured bead.
The fourth will buy you nothing at all
Since it has a hole in it.
I beg you, therefore,
String it about your neck,
At least it will remind you of my poverty.

AFTER A STORM

You walk under the ice trees.
They sway, and crackle,
And arch themselves splendidly
To deck your going.
The white sun flips them its colour
Before you.
They are blue,
And mauve,
And emerald.

They are amber,
And jade,
And sardonynx.
They are silver fretted to flame
And startled to stillness,
Bunched, splintered, iridescent.
You walk under the ice trees
And the bright snow creaks as you step
upon it.

My dogs leap about you,
And their barking strikes upon the air
Like sharp hammer-strokes on metal.
You walk under the ice trees
But you are more dazzling than the ice
flowers,
And the dogs' barking
Is not so loud to me as your quietness.

You walk under the ice trees
At ten o'clock in the morning.

OPAL

You are ice and fire,
The touch of you burns my hands like
snow.
You are cold and flame.
You are the crimson of amaryllis,
The silver of moon-touched magnolias.
When I am with you,
My heart is a frozen pond
Gleaming with agitated torches.

WAKEFULNESS

Jolt of market-carts;
Steady drip of horses' hoofs on hard pave-
ment;
A black sky lacquered over with blueness,
And the lights of Battersea Bridge
Pricking pale in the dawn.
The beautiful hours are passing
And still you sleep!
Tired heart of my joy,
Incurved upon your dreams,
Will the day come before you have
opened to me?

ORANGE OF MIDSUMMER

You came to me in the pale starting of
Spring,
And I could not see the world
For the blue mist of wonder before my
eyes.

You beckoned me over a rainbow bridge,
And I set foot upon it, trembling.
Through pearl and saffron I followed you,
Through heliotrope and rose,
Iridescence after iridescence,
And to me it was all one
Because of the blue mist that held my
eyes.

You came again, and it was red-hearted
Summer.
You called to me across a field of poppies
and wheat,
With a narrow path slicing through it
Straight to an outer boundary of trees.
And I ran along the path,
Brushing over the yellow wheat beside it,
And came upon you under a maple-tree,
plaiting poppies for a girdle.
"Are you thirsty?" said you,
And held out a cup.
But the water in the cup was scarlet and
crimson
Like the poppies in your hands.
"It looks like blood," I said.
"Like blood," you said,
"Does it?"
But drink it, my Beloved."

SHORE GRASS

The moon is cold over the sand-dunes,
And the clumps of sea-grasses flow and
glitter;
The thin chime of my watch tells the
quarter after midnight;
And still I hear nothing
But the windy beating of the sea.

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

Why do you not sleep, Beloved?

It is so cold that the stars stand out of
the sky
Like golden nails not driven home.
The fire crackles pleasantly,
And I sit here listening
For your regular breathing from the room
above.

What keeps you awake, Beloved?
Is it the same nightmare that keeps me
strained with listening
So that I cannot read?

THE COUNTRY HOUSE

Did the door move, or was it always ajar?
The gladioli on the table are pale mauve.
I smell pale mauve and blue,
Blue soft like bruises — putrid — oo-
zing —
The air oozes blue — mauve —
And the door with the black line where
it does not shut!

I must pass that door to go to bed,
Or I must stay here
And watch the crack
Oozing air.

Is it — air?

NERVES

The lake is steel-coloured and unber,
And a clutter of gaunt clouds blows
rapidly across the sky.

I wonder why you chose to be buried
In this little grave-yard by the lake-side.
It is all very well on blue mornings,
Summer mornings,
Autumn mornings polished with sunlight.
But in Winter, in the cold storms,
When there is no wind,
And the snow murmurs as it falls!
The grave-stones glimmer in the twilight
As though they were rubbed with phos-
phorous.
The direct road is up a hill,
Through woods —
I will take the lake road,
I can drive faster there.
You used to like to drive with me —
Why does death make you this fearful
thing?
Flick! — flack! — my horse's feet strike
the stones.
There is a house just round the bend.

LEFT BEHIND

White phlox and white hydrangeas,
High, thin clouds,
A low, warm sun.
So it is this afternoon.
But the phlox will be a drift of petals,
And the hydrangeas stained and fallen
Before you come again.

I cannot look at the flowers,
Nor the lifting leaves of the trees.
Without you, there is no garden,
No bright colours,
No shining leaves.
There is only space,
Stretching endlessly forward —
And I walk, bent, unseeing,
Waiting to catch the first faint scuffle
Of withered leaves.

AUTUMN

They brought me a quilled, yellow dahlia,
Opulent, flaunting.
Round gold
Flung out of a pale green stalk.
Round, ripe gold
Of maturity,
Meticulously filled and flaming,
A fire-ball of proclamation:
Fecundity decked in staring yellow
For all the world to see.
They brought a quilled, yellow dahlia,
To me who am barren.
Shall I send it to you,
You who have taken with you
All I once possessed?

THE SIXTEENTH FLOOR

The noise of the city sounds below me.
It clashes against the houses
And rises like smoke through the narrow
streets.
It polishes the marble fronts of houses,
Grating itself against them,
And they shine in the lamplight
And cast their echoes back upon the
asphalt of the streets.

But I hear no sound of your voice,
The city is incoherent — trivial,
And my brain aches with emptiness.

STRAIN

It is late
And the clock is striking thin hours,
But sleep has become a terror to me,
Lest I wake in the night
Bewildered,
And stretching out my arms to comfort
myself with you,

Clasp instead the cold body of the darkness.

All night it will hunger over me,
And push and undulate against me,
Breathing into my mouth
And passing long fingers through my
diffusing hair.

Only the dawn can loose me from it,
And the grey streaks of morning melt it
from my side.

Bring many candles,
Though they stab my tired brain
And hurt it.
For I am afraid of the twining of the
darkness
And dare not sleep.

HAUNTED

See! He trails his toes
Through the long streaks of moonlight,
And the nails of his fingers glitter:
They claw and flash among the tree-tops.
His lips suck at my open window,
And his breath creeps about my body
And lies in pools under my knees.
I can see his mouth sway and wobble,
Sticking itself against the window-jamb,
But the moonlight is bright on the floor,
Without a shadow.
Hark! A hare is strangling in the forest,
And the wind tears a shutter from the
wall.

GROTESQUE

Why do the lilies goggle their tongues at
me
When I pluck them;
And writhe, and twist,
And strangle themselves against my
fingers,
So that I can hardly weave the garland
For your hair?
Why do they shrink your name
And spit at me
When I would cluster them?
Must I kill them
To make them lie still,
And send you a wreath of lolling corpses
To turn putrid and soft
On your forehead
While you dance?

SNOW IN APRIL

Sunshine!
Sunshine!
Smooth blue skies,
Fresh winds through early tree-tops,
Pointed shoots,
White bells,
White and purple cups.
I am a plum-tree
Checked at its flowering.
My blossoms wither,
My branches grow brittle again.
I stretch them out and up,
But the snowflakes fall —
Whirl — and fall.
April and snow,
And my heart stuffed and suffocating
Dead,
With my blossoms brown and dropping
Upon my cold roots.

A SPRIG OF ROSEMARY

I cannot see your face.
When I think of you,
It is your hands which I see.
Your hands
Sewing,
Holding a book,
Resting for a moment on the sill of a
window.
My eyes keep always the sight of your
hands,
But my heart holds the sound of your
voice,
And the soft brightness which is your
soul.

MALADIE DE L'APRES-MIDI

Why does the clanking of a tip-cart
In the road
Make me so sad?
The sound beats the air
With flat blows,
Dull and continued.

Not even the clear sunshine
Through bronze and green oak leaves,
Nor the crimson spindle of a cedar-tree
Hooded with Virginia creeper,
Nor the humming brightness of the air,
Can comfort my melancholy.

The cart goes slowly,
It creeps at a foot-pace,
And the flat blows of sound
Hurt me,
And bring me nearly to weeping.

NOVEMBER

The vine leaves against the brick walls of
my house
Are rusty and broken.
Dead leaves gather under the pine-trees,
The brittle boughs of lilac-bushes
Sweep against the stars.
And I sit under a lamp
Trying to write down the emptiness of
my heart.
Even the cat will not stay with me,
But prefers the rain
Under the mcagre shelter of a cellar win-
dow.

NOSTALGIA

"Through pleasures and palaces" —
Through hotels, and Pullman cars, and
steamships . . .

Pink and white camellias
floating in a crystal bowl,
The sharp smell of firewood,
The scrape and rustle of a dog stretching
himself
on a hardwood floor,
And your voice, reading — reading —
to the slow ticking of an old brass
clock . . .

"Tickets, please!"
And I watch the man in front of me
Fumbling in fourteen pockets,
While the conductor balances his ticket-
punch
Between his fingers.

PREPARATION

To-day I went into a shop where they sell
spectacles.

"Sir," said the shopman, "what can I do
for you?
Are you far-sighted or near-sighted?"

"Neither the one nor the other," said I.
"I can read the messages passing along
the telegraph wires,
And I can see the antennae of a fly
Perched upon the bridge of my nose."

"Rose-coloured spectacles, perhaps?" sug-
gested the shopman.

"Indeed, no," said I.
"Were I to add them to my natural
vision
I should see everything ruined with
blood."

"Green spectacles," opined the shopman.

"By no means," said I.
"I am far too prone to that colour at mo-
ments.
No. You can give me some smoked
glasses
For I have to meet a train this after-
noon."

"What a world yours must be, Sir."
Observed the shopman as he wrapped up
the spectacles,
"When it requires to be dimmed by
smoked glasses."

"Not a world," said I, and laid the money
down on the counter,
"Certainly not a world.
Good-day."

A DECADE

When you came, you were like red wine
and honey,
And the taste of you burnt my mouth
with its sweetness.
Now you are like morning bread,
Smooth and pleasant.
I hardly taste you at all for I know your
savour,
But I am completely nourished.

PENUMBRA

As I sit here in the quiet Summer night,
Suddenly, from the distant road, there
comes
The grind and rush of an electric car.
And, from still farther off,

An engine puffs sharply,
Followed by the drawn-out shunting
scrape of a freight train.
These are the sounds that men make
In the long business of living.
They will always make such sounds,
Years after I am dead and cannot hear
them.

Sitting here in the Summer night,
I think of my death.
What will it be like for you then?
You will see my chair
With its bright chintz covering
Standing in the afternoon sunshine,
As now.

You will see my narrow table
At which I have written so many hours.
My dogs will push their noses into your
hand.

And ask — ask —
Clinging to you with puzzled eyes.

The old house will still be here,
The old house which has known me since
the beginning.

The walls which have watched me while
I played:
Soldiers, marbles, paper-dolls,
Which have protected me and my books.

The front-door will gaze down among the
old trees
Where, as a child, I hunted ghosts and
Indians;
It will look out on the wide gravel sweep
Where I rolled my hoop,
And at the rhododendron bushes
Where I caught black-spotted butterflies.

The old house will guard you,
As I have done.
Its walls and rooms will hold you,
And I shall whisper my thoughts and
fancies
As always,
From the pages of my books.

You will sit here, some quiet Summer
night,
Listening to the puffing trains,
But you will not be lonely,
For these things are a part of me.
And my love will go on speaking to you
Through the chairs, and the tables, and
the pictures,
As it does now through my voice,
And the quick, necessary touch of my
hand.

PRIMAIRE

Dearest, we are like two flowers
Blooming last in a yellowing garden,
A purple aster flower and a red one
Standing alone in a withered desolation.

The garden plants are shattered and
seeded.

One brittle leaf scrapes against another,
Fiddling echoes of a rush of petals.
Now only you and I nodding together.

Many were with us; they have all faded.
Only we are purple and crimson,
Only we in the dew-clear mornings,
Smartened into colour as the sun rises.

When I scarcely see you in the flat moon-
light,
And later when my cold roots tighten,
I am anxious for the morning,
I cannot rest in fear of what may happen.

You or I — and I am a coward.
Surely frost should take the crimson.
Purple is a finer colour,
Very splendid in isolation.

So we nod above the broken
Stems of flowers almost rotted.
Many mornings there cannot be now
For us both. Ah, Dear, I love you!

Eyes, and Ears, and Walking

SOLITAIRE

When night drifts along the streets of the
city,
And sits down between the uneven roofs,

My mind begins to peek and peer.
It plays at ball in old, blue Chinese
gardens,
And shakes wrought dice-cups in Pagan
temples

Amid the broken flutings of white pillars.
It dances with purple and yellow crocuses
in its hair,
And its feet shine as they flutter over
drenched grasses.
How light and laughing my mind is,
When all the good folk have put out
their bedroom candles,
And the city is still!

THE BACK BAY FENS

STUDY IN ORANGE AND SILVER

Through the Spring-thickened branches
I see it floating,
An ivory dome
Headed to gold by the dim sun.

It hangs against a white-misted sky,
And the swollen branches
Open or cover it,
As they blow in the wet wind.

FREE FANTASIA ON JAPANESE THEMES

All the afternoon there has been a chirp-
ing of birds,
And the sun lies, warm and still, on the
Western sides of puffed branches.
There is no wind,
Even the little twigs at the ends of the
branches do not move,
And the needles of the pines are solid,
Bands of inarticulated blackness,
Against the blue-white sky.
Still — but alert —
And my heart is still and alert,
Passive with sunshine
Avid of adventure.

I would experience new emotions —
Submit to strange enchantments —
Bend to influences,
Bizarre, exotic,
Fresh with burgeoning.

I would climb a Sacred Mountain,
Struggle with other pilgrims up a steep
path through pine-trees
Above to the smooth, treeless slopes,
And prostrate myself before a painted
shrine,
Beating my hands upon the hot earth,
Quieting my eyes with the distant sparkle
Of the faint Spring sea.

I would recline upon a balcony
In purple curving folds of silk,
And my dress should be silvered with a
pattern
Of butterflies and swallows,
And the black band of my obi
Should flash with gold, circular threads,
And glitter when I moved.
I would lean against the railing
While you sang to me of wars —
Past, and to come —
Sang and played the *sumisen*.
Perhaps I would beat a little hand drum
In time to your singing;
Perhaps I would only watch the play of
light
On the hilts of your two swords.

I would sit in a covered boat,
Rocking slowly to the narrow waves of a
river,
While above us, an arc of moving lan-
terns,
Curved a bridge.
And beyond the bridge,
A hiss of gold
Blooming out of blackness,
Rockets exploded,
And died in a soft dripping of coloured
stars.
We would float between the high trestles,
And drift away from the other boats,
Until the rockets flared without sound
And their falling stars hung silent in the
sky
Like wistaria clusters above the ancient
entrance of a temple.

I would anything
Rather than this cold paper,
With, outside, the quiet sun on the sides
of burgeoning branches,
And inside, only my books.

AT THE BOOKSELLER'S

Hanging from the ceiling by threads
Are prints,
Hundreds of prints
Of actors and courtesans,
Cheap, everyday prints
To delight the common people.
Those which please the most are women
With long, slim fingers,
In dresses of snow-blue,

Of green the colour of the heart of a
 young onion,
 Of rose, of black, of dead-leaf brown.
 Over the dresses runs a light tracing
 Of superimposed tresses:
 Orange undulations, zigzag cinnabar trel-
 lises,
 Patterns of purplish paulownias.
 In the corner of one of the prints is
 written:
 "Ulamaro has here painted his elegant
 voyage."
 They cost nothing, these pictures,
 They are only one of the cheap amuse-
 ments of the populace.
 Yet they say that the publisher, Tsoutaya,
 Has made a fortune.

VIOLIN SONATA BY VINCENT D'INDY

TO CHARLES MARTIN LOEITLER

A little brown room in a sea of fields,
 Fields pink as rose-mallows
 Under a fading rose-mallow sky.

Four candles on a tall iron candlestick,
 Clustered like altar lights.
 Above, the models of four brown Chinese
 junks
 Sailing round the brown walls,
 Silent and motionless.

The quick cut of a vibrating string,
 Another, and another,
 Biting into the silence.
 Notes pierce, sharper and sharper;
 They draw up in a freshness of sound,
 Higher—higher, to the whiteness of in-
 tolerable beauty.
 They are jagged and clear,
 Like snow peaks against the sky;
 They hurt like air too pure to breathe.
 Is it caught and harshest,
 Or flesh sawing against the cold blue
 gates of the sky?

The brown Chinese junks sail silently
 round the brown walls.

A cricket hurries across the bare floor.

The windows are black, for the sun has
 set.

Only the candles,
 Clustered like altar lamps upon their tall
 candlestick,
 Light the violinist as he plays.

WINTER'S TURNING

Snow is still on the ground,
 But there is a golden brightness in the air.
 Across the river,
 Blue,
 Blue,
 Sweeping widely under the arches
 Of many bridges,
 Is a spire and a dome,
 Clear as though ringed with ice-flakes,
 Golden, and pink, and jocund.
 On a near-by steeple,
 A golden weather-cock flashes smartly,
 His open beak "Cock-a-doodle-dooing"
 Straight at the ear of Heaven.
 A tall apartment house,
 Crocus-coloured,
 Thrusts up from the street
 Like a new-sprung flower.
 Another street is edged and patterned
 With the bloom of bricks,
 Houses and houses of rose-red bricks,
 Every window a-glitter.
 The city is a parterre,
 Blowing and glowing,
 Alight with the wind,
 Washed over with gold and mercury.
 Let us throw up our hats,
 For we are past the age of balls
 And have none handy.
 Let us take hold of hands,
 And race along the sidewalks,
 And dodge the traffic in crowded streets.
 Let us whirl with the golden spoke-wheels
 Of the sun.
 For to-morrow Winter drops into the
 waste-basket,
 And the calendar calls it March.

EUCHARIS AMAZONICA

Wax-white lilies
 shaped like narcissus,
 Frozen snow-rockets
 burst from a thin green stem,
 Your trumpets spray antennae
 like cold, sweet notes stabbing air.
 In your cups
 is the sharpness of winds,

The white husks of your blooms
crack as ice cracks.
You strike against the darkness
as hear-frost patterning a window.

Wax-white lilies,
Eucharis lilies,
Mary kissed your petals,
And the chill of pure snow
Buried her lips with its six-pointed seal.

THE TWO RAINS

SPRING RAIN

Tinkling of ankle bracelets.
Dull striking
Of jade and sardonix
From whirling ends of jointed circlets.

SUMMER RAIN

Clashing of bronze bucklers,
Screaming of horses.
Red plumes of head-trappings
Flashing above spears.

GOOD GRACIOUS!

They say there is a fairy in every streak'd
tulip.
I have rows and rows of them beside my
door.
Hoop-la! Come out, Brownie,
And I will give you an emerald ear-ring!
You had better come out,
For to-morrow may be stormy,
And I could never bring myself to part
with my emerald ear-rings
Unless there was a moon.

TREES

The branches of the trees lie in layers
Above and behind each other,
And the sun strikes on the outstanding
leaves
And turns them white,
And they dance like a spatter of pebbles
Against a green wall.

The trees make a solid path leading up
in the air.
It looks as though I could walk upon it
If I only had courage to step out of the
window.

DAWN ADVENTURE

I stood in my window
looking at the double cherry:
A great height of white stillness,
Underneath a sky
the colour of milky grey jade.
Suddenly a crow flew between me and the
tree —
Swooping, falling, in a shadow-black
curve —
And blotted himself out in the blurred
branches
of a leafless ash.
There he stayed for some time,
and I could only distinguish him
by his slight moving.
Then a wind caught the upper branches
of the cherry,
And the long, white stems nodded up and
down,
casually, to me in the window,
Nodded — but overhead the grey jade
clouds
passed slowly, indifferently, to-
ward the sea.

THE CORNER OF NIGHT AND MORNING

Crows are cawing over pine-trees,
They are teaching their young to fly
Above the tall pyramids of double cher-
ries.
Rose lustre over black lacquer —
The feathers of the young birds reflect
the rose-rising sun.
Caw! Caw!
I want to go to sleep,
But perhaps it is better to stand in the
window
And watch the crows teaching their
young to fly
Over the pines and the pyramidal cherries,
In the rose-gold light
Of five o'clock on a May morning.

BEECH, PINE, AND SUNLIGHT

The sudden April heat
Stretches itself
Under the smooth, leafless branches
Of the beech-tree,
And lies lightly
Upon the great patches

Of purple and white crocus
With their panting, wide-open cups.

A clear wind
Slips through the naked beech boughs,
And their shadows scarcely stir.
But the pine-trees beyond sigh
When it passes over them
And presses back their needles,
And slides gently down their stems.

It is a languor of pale, south-starting sun-
light
Come upon a morning unawaked,
And holding her drowsing.

PLANNING THE GARDEN

Bring pencils, fine pointed,
For our writing must be infinitesimal;
And bring sheets of paper
To spread before us.
Now draw the plan of our garden beds,
And outline the borders and the paths
Correctly.
We will scatter little words
Upon the paper,
Like seeds about to be planted;
We will fill all the whiteness
With little words,
So that the brown earth
Shall never show between our flowers;
Instead, there will be petals and greenness
From April till November.
These narrow lines
Are rose-drifted thrift,
Edging the paths.
And here I plant nodding columbines,
With tree-tall wistarias behind them,
Each stem umbrellal'd in its purple fringe.
Winged sweet peas shall flutter next to
pansies
All down the sunny centre.
Foxglove spears,
Thrust back against the swaying lilac
leaves.
Will bloom and fade before the China
asters
Smear their crude colours over Autumn
hazes
These double paths, dividing make an
angle
For bushes,
Bleeding hearts, I think,
Their flowers jugging

Like little ladies,
Satined, hoop-skirted,
Ready for a ball.
The round black circles
Mean striped and flaunting tulips,
The clustered trumpets of yellow jon-
quils,
And the sharp blue of hyacinths and
squills.
These specks like dotted grain
Are coreopsis, bright as bandanas,
And ice-blue heliotrope with its sticky
leaves,
And mignonette
Whose sober-coloured cones of bloom
Scent quiet mornings.
And poppies! Poppies! Poppies!
The hatchings shall all mean a tide of
poppies,
Crumkled and frail and flowing in the
breeze

Wait just a moment,
Here's an empty space.
Now plant me lilies-of-the-valley —
This pear-tree over them will keep them
cool —
We'll have a lot of them
With white bells jingling.
The steps
Shall be all soft with stone-crop;
And at the top
I'll make an arch of roses,
Crimson,
Bee-enticing.

There, it is done;
Seal up the paper.
Let us go to bed and dream of flowers.

IMPRESSIONIST PICTURE OF A GARDEN

Give me sunlight, cupped in a paint
brush,
And smear the red of peonies
Over my garden.
Splash blue upon it,
The hard blue of Canterbury bells,
Faling through larkspur
Into heliotrope,
To wash away among forget-me-nots
Dip red again to mix a purple,
And lay on pointed flares of lilacs against
bright green.

Streak yellow for nasturtiums and marsh
marigolds
And flame it up to orange for my lilies.
Now dot it so — and so — along an edge
Of Iceland poppies.
Swirl it a bit, and faintly,
That is honeysuckle.
Now put a band of brutal, bleeding crim-
son
And tail it off to pink, to give the roses.
And while you're loaded up with pink,
Just blotch about that bed of phlox.
Fill up with cobalt and dash in a sky
As hot and heavy as you can make it;
Then tree-green pulled up into that
Gives a fine jolt of colour.
Strain it out,
And melt your twigs into the cobalt sky.
Toss on some Chinese white to flash the
clouds,
And trust the sunlight you've got in your
paint.
There is the picture.

A BATHIER

AFTER A PICTURE BY ANDREAS ZORN
Thick dappled by circles of sunshine and
fluttering shade,
Your bright, naked body advances, blown
over by leaves,
Half-quenched in their various green, just
a point of you showing,
A knee or a thigh, sudden glimpsed, then
at once blotted into
The filmy and flickering forest, to start
out again
Triumphant in smooth, supple roundness,
edged sharp as white ivory,
Cool, perfect, with rose rarely tinting
your lips and your breasts,
Swelling out from the green in the opu-
lent curves of ripe fruit,
And hidden, like fruit, by the swift inter-
mittence of leaves.
So, clinging to branches and moss, you
advance on the ledges
Of rock which hang over the stream, with
the wood-smells about you,
The pungence of strawberry plants, and
of gum-oozing spruces,
While below runs the water, impatient,
impatient — to take you,
To splash you, to run down your sides, to
sing you, of deepness,

Of pools brown and golden, with brown-
and-gold flags on their borders,
Of blue, lingering skies floating solemnly
over your beauty,
Of undulant waters a-sway in the effort
to hold you,
To keep you submerged and quiescent
while over you glories
The Summer.

Oread, Dryad, or Naiad, or just
Woman, clad only in youth and in gal-
lant perfection,
Standing up in a great burst of sunshine,
you dazzle my eyes
Like a snow-star, a moon, your effulgence
burns up in a halo,
For you are the chalice which holds all
the races of men.

You slip into the pool and the water folds
over your shoulder,
And over the tree-tops the clouds slowly
follow your swimming,
And the scent of the woods is sweet on
this hot Summer morning.

DOG-DAYS

A ladder sticking up at the open window,
The top of an old ladder;
And all of Summer is there.

Great waves and tufts of wistaria surge
across the window,
And a thin, belated blossom
Jerks up and down in the sunlight;
Purple translucence against the blue sky.
"Tie back this branch," I say,
But my hands are sticky with leaves,
And my nostrils widen to the smell of
crushed green.
The ladder moves uneasily at the open
window,
And I call to the man beneath,
"Tie back that branch."

'There is a ladder leaning against the win-
dow-sill,
And a mutter of thunder in the air.

AUGUST

LATE AFTERNOON

Smoke-colour, rose, saffron,
With a hard edge chipping the blue sky,

A great cloud hung over the village,
And the white-painted meeting-house,
And the steeple with the gilded weather-
cock
Heading and flashing to the wind.

HILLY COUNTRY

Jangle of cow-bells through pine-trees.
Grasshoppers leaping up out of the grass.
The mountain is bloomed like a grape
(Silver, hazing over purple),
It blocks into the sky like a shadow.
The South wind blows intermittently.
And the clanking of the cow-bells comes
up the hill in gusts.

TREES IN WINTER

PINE-TREES:

Black clouds slowly swaying
Over a white earth.

HEMLOCKS:

Coned green shadows
Through a falling veil.

ELM-TREES:

Stiff black threads
Lacing over silver.

CEDARS:

Layered undulations
Roofing naked ground.

ALMONDS:

Flaring needles
Stabbing at a grey sky.

WEeping CHERRIES:

Tossing smoke
Swept down by wind.

OAKS:

Twisted beams
Cased in alabaster.

SEA COAL

Swift like the tongues of lilies,
Striped Amaryllis
Thrusting out of cloven basalt.
Amber and chalcidony,
And the snapping of sand

On rocks
Glazed by the wind.

DOLPHINS IN BLUE WATER

Hey! Crackerjack — jump!
Blue water,
Pink water,
Swirl, flick, flitter;
Snout into a wave-trough,
Plunge, curl.
Bow over,
Under,
Razor-cut and tumble.
Roll, turn —
Straight — and shoot at the sky,
All rose-flame drippings.
Down ring,
Drop,
Nose under,
Hoop,
Tail,
Dive,
And gone;
With smooth over-swirlings of blue water,
Oil-smooth cobalt,
Slipping, liquid lapis lazuli,
Emerald shadings,
Tintings of pink and ochre.
Prismatic slidings
Underneath a windy sky.

MOTOR LIGHTS ON A HILL ROAD

Yellow-green, yellow-green, yellow-green
and silver,
Rimble of leaves,
Blowing,
Passing,
Flowing overhead
Arched leaves,
Silver of twisted leaves;
Fan-like yellow glare
On tree-trunks.
Fluted side wake
Breaking from one polished stem to an-
other.
Swift drop on a disappearing road,
Jolt — a wooden bridge,
And a flat sky opens in front.
Above —
The wide sky careers furiously past a still
moon.
Suddenly — Slap! — green, yellow,

Leaves and no moon.
 Ribbed leaves,
 Chamfered light patterns
 Playing on a pleaching of leaves.
 Wind,
 Strong, rushing,
 Continuous, like the leaves.
 Wind sliding beside us,
 Meeting us,
 Pointing against us through a yellow-green tunnel.
 Dot . . . Dot . . . Dot . . .
 Little square lights of windows,
 Black walls stamping into silver mist,
 Shingle roofs aflame like mica.
 Elliptical cutting curve
 Round a piazza where rocking-chairs
 creak emptily.
 Square white fences
 Chequer-boarded backwards.
 Plunge at a black hill,
 Flash into water-waving fluctuations.
 Leaves gush out of the darkness

And boil past in yellow-green curds:
 We slip between them with the smoothness of oil.
 Hooped yellow light spars
 Banding green
 Glide toward us,
 Impinge upon our progress,
 Open and let us through.
 Liquid leaves lap the wheels,
 Toss,
 Splash,
 Disappear.
 Green and yellow water-slopes hang over us,
 Close behind us,
 Push us forward.
 We are the centre of a green and yellow bubble,
 Changing,
 Expanding,
 Skimming over the face of the world —
 Green and yellow, occasionally tinged with silver.

As Toward One's Self

IN A TIME OF DEARTH

Before me,
 On either side of me,
 I see sand.
 If I turn the corner of my house
 I see sand.
 Long — brown —
 Lines and levels of flat
 Sand.

 If I could see a caravan
 Heave over the edge of it:
 The camels wobbling and swaying,
 Stepping like ostriches,
 With rocking palanquins
 Whose curtains conceal
 Languors and faintnesses,
 Muslins tossed aside,
 And a disorder of cushions.
 The swinging curtains would pique and
 solace me.
 But I see only sand,
 Long, brown sand,
 Sand.

If I could see a herd of Arab horses
 Galloping,

Their manes and tails pulled straight
 By the speed of their going;
 Their bodies sleek and round
 Like bellying sails.
 They would beat the sand with their forefeet,
 And scatter it with their hind-feet,
 So that it whirled in a cloud of orange,
 And the sun through it
 Was clip-edged, without rays — and dun.
 But I only see sand,
 Long, brown, hot sand,
 Sand.

If I could see a mirage
 Blue-white at the horizon,
 With palm-trees about it;
 Tall, windless palm-trees, grouped about
 a glitter.
 If I could strain towards it,
 And think of the water creeping round
 my ankles,
 Tickling under my knees,
 Leeching up my sides,
 Spreading over my back!
 But I only feel the grinding beneath my
 feet.
 And I only see sand,

Long, dry sand,
Scorching sand,
Sand

If a sand storm would come
And spit against my windows,
Snapping upon them, and ringing their
vibrations,
Swelling over the roof,
Seeping under the door-jamb,
Suffocating me and making me struggle
for air
But I only see sand,
Sand lying dead in the sun,
I me, and hues of sand,
Sand

I will paste newspapers over the windows
to shut out the sand,
I will fit them into one another, and
fasten the corners
Then I will strike matches
And read of politics, and murders, and
festivals
Three years old
But I shall not see the sand any more
And I can read
While my matches last

ALIENS

The chitter of little people
Breaks on my purpose
Like the water drops which slowly wear
the rock to powder
And while I laugh
My spirit crumbles at their teasing touch

MIDDLE AGE

Like black ice
Scrolled over with unintelligible patterns
by an ignorant skater
Is the dulled surface of my heart

LAVINIA BOHLMÉ

Alone I wait my soul against the keen
Unwinked sky, with its long stretching
blue
I polish it with sunlight and pale dew,
And dimmence it with young blowing
leaves
Into the handle of my life I set
Sprays of magnolia

And periwinkle,
Twisted into sheaves
The colours laugh and twinkle
Twined bands of roadways, liquid in the
sheen
Of street lamps and the ruby shine of
cabs,
Glisten for my delight all down its length,
And there are sudden sparks
Of morning ripples over tree-fluttered
pools
My soul is fretted full of gleams and
darks,
Pulsing and still
Smooth edged, untarnished, girded in my
soul
I walk the world

But in its narrow alleys,
The low hung, dust-thick valleys
Where the mob shuffles its empty tread,
My soul is blunted against dullard wits,
Smothered with sick juices,
Nicked impotent for other than low uses
Its arabesques and sparkling subtleties
Crusted to grey, and all its changing sur-
faces
Spread with unpalpitant monotones

I recreate myself upon the polished sky
A honing strop above converging roofs
The patterns show again, like buried
proofs
Of old, lost empires bursting on the eye
In hieroglyphed and graven splendour
The whirling winds brush past my head,
And prodigal once more, a reckless
spender
Of disregarded beauty, a defender
Of undesired faiths,
I walk the world

FLAME APPLE

Little hot apples of fire,
Burst out of the flaming stem
Of my heart,
I do not understand how you quickened
and grew,
And you amaze me
While I gather you

I lay you, one by one,
Upon a table

And now you seem beautiful and strange
to me,
And I stand before you,
Wondering.

THE TRAVELLING BEAR

Grass-blades push up between the cob-
blestones
And catch the sun on their flat sides
Shooting it back,
Cold and emerald,
Into the eyes of passers-by.

And over the cobblestones,
Square-footed and heavy,
Dances the trained bear.
The cobbles cut his feet,
And he has a ring in his nose
Which hurts him;
But still he dances,
For the keeper pricks him with a sharp
stick,
Under his fur.

Now the crowd gapes and chuckles,
And boys and young women shuffle their
feet in time to the dancing bear.
They see him wobbling
Against a dust of emerald and gold,
And they are greatly delighted.

The legs of the bear shake with fatigue,
And his back aches,
And the shining grass-blades dazzle and
confuse him.
But still he dances,
Because of the little, pointed stick.

MERCHANDISE

I made a song one morning,
Sitting in the shade under the hornbeam
hedge.
I played it on my pipe,
And the clear notes delighted me,
And the little hedge-sparrows and the
chipmunks
All seemed pleased.
So I was very proud
That I had made so good a song.

Would you like to hear my song?
I will play it to you
As I did that evening to my Beloved,

Standing on the moon-bright cobbles
Underneath her window.
But you are not my Beloved,
You must give me a silver shilling,
Round and glittering like the moon.
Copper I will not take,
How should copper pay for a song
All made out of nothing,
And so beautiful!

THE POEM

It is only a little twig
With a green bud at the end;
But if you plant it,
And water it,
And set it where the sun will be above it,
It will grow into a tall bush
With many flowers,
And leaves which thrust hither and
thither
Sparkling.
From its roots will come freshness,
And beneath it the grass-blades
Will bend and recover themselves,
And clash one upon another
In the blowing wind.

But if you take my twig
And throw it into a closet
With mousetraps and blunted tools,
It will shrivel and waste.
And, some day,
When you open the door,
You will think it an old twisted nail,
And sweep it into the dust bin
With other rubbish.

THE PEDDLER OF FLOWERS

I came from the country
With flowers,
Larkspur and roses,
Fretted lilies
In their leaves,
And long, cool lavender.

I carried them
From house to house,
And cried them
Down hot streets.
The sun fell
Upon my flowers,
And the dust of the streets
Blew over my basket.

That night
I slept upon the open seats
Of a circus,
Where all day long
People had watched
The antics
Of a painted clown.

BALLS

Throw the blue ball above the little twigs
of the tree-tops,
And cast the yellow ball straight at the
buzzing stars.

All our life is a flinging of coloured balls
to impossible distances.
And in the end what have we?
A tired arm — a tip-tilted nose.

Ah! Well! Give me the purple one.
Wouldn't it be a fine thing if I could
make it stick
On top of the Methodist steeple?

THE FANATIC

Like Don Quixote, I tilted at a windmill.
On my good, grey horse I spurred at it,
Calloping heavily over the plain.
My lance pierced the framework of a sail
and stuck there,
And the impact sent me sprawling on the
ground.

My horse wandered away, cropping,
But I started up and fell upon the wind-
mill,
With my dagger unsheathed.
Valiantly I stabbed a dipping sail,
But it rose before I could withdraw the
weapon,
And the blade went up with it, gleaming
— flickering.

Then I drew a pistol,
For I am an up-to-date knight
And my armory unrivalled.
I aimed above me,
At the sky between two sails.
Ping! went the bullet,
And a round, blue eye pecked at me
through the wheeling sail.
I fired again —
Two eyes winked at me, jeering.

Then I ran at the windmill with my fists,
But it struck me down and left me.
All night I lay there,
And the great sails turned about and
about,
And brushed me with their shadows,
For there was a moon.

FIREWORKS

You hate me and I hate you,
And we are so polite, we two!

But whenever I see you, I burst apart
And scatter the sky with my blazing
heart.

It spits and sparkles in stars and balls,
Buds into roses — and flares, and falls.

Scarlet buttons, and pale green disks,
Silver spirals and asterisks,
Shoot and tremble in a mist
Peppered with mauve and amethyst.

I shine in the windows and light up the
trees,
And all because I hate you, if you please.

And when you meet me, you rend
asunder
And go up in a flaming wonder
Of saffron cubes, and crimson moons,
And wheels all amaranths and maroons.

Golden lozenges and spades,
Arrows of malachites and jades,
Patens of copper, azure sheaves.
As you mount, you flash in the glossy
leaves.

Such fireworks as we make, we two!
Because you hate me and I hate you.

TRADES

I want to be a carpenter,
To work all day long in clean wood,
Shaving it into little thin slivers
Which screw up into curls behind my
plane;
Pounding square, black nails into white
boards,
With the claws of my hammer glistening
Like the tongue of a snake.
I want to shingle a house,

Sitting on the ridge-pole in a bright breeze.
 I want to put the shingles on neatly,
 Taking great care that each is directly between two others.
 I want my hands to have the tang of wood:
 Spruce, Cedar, Cypress.
 I want to draw a line on a board with a flat pencil,
 And then saw along that line,
 With the sweet-smelling sawdust piling up in a yellow heap at my feet.

That is the life!
 Heigh-ho!
 It is much easier than to write this poem.

GENERATIONS

You are like the stem
 Of a young beech-tree,
 Straight and swaying,
 Breaking out in golden leaves.
 Your walk is like the blowing of a beech-tree
 On a hill.
 Your voice is like leaves
 Softly struck upon by a South wind.
 Your shadow is no shadow, but a scattered sunshine;
 And at night you pull the sky down to you
 And hood yourself in stars.

 But I am like a great oak under a cloudy sky,
 Watching a stripling beech grow up at my feet.

ENTENTE CORDIALE

The young gentleman from the foreign nation
 Sat on the sofa and smiled.
 He stayed for two hours and I talked to him.
 He answered agreeably,
 He was very precise, very graceful, very enthusiastic.

I thought:
 Is it possible that there are no nations,
 only individuals?
 That it is the few who give gold and flowers,
 While the many have only copper
 So worn that even the stamp is obliterated?
 I talked to the young gentleman from the foreign nation,
 And the faint smell of copper assailed my nostrils:
 Copper,
 Twisted copper coins dropped by old women
 Into the alms-boxes of venerable churches.

CASTLES IN SPAIN

I build my poems with little strokes of ink
 Drawn shining down white paper, line and line,
 And there is nothing here which men call fine,
 Nothing but hieroglyphs to make them think.
 I have no broad and blowing plain to link
 And loop with aqueducts, no golden mine
 To crest my pillars, no bright twisted vine
 Which I can train about a fountain's brink.
 Those others laced their poems from sea to sea
 And floated navies over fields of grain,
 They fretted their full fancies in strong stone
 And struck them on the sky. And yet I gain;
 For bombs and bullets cannot menace me,
 Who have no substance to be overthrown.
 Cathedrals crash to rubbish, but my towers,
 Carved in the whirling and enduring brain,
 Fade, and persist, and rise again, like flowers.

Plumets to Circumstance

ELY CATHEDRAL

Anæmic women, stupidly dressed and shod
 In squeaky shoes, thump down the nave
 to land an expurgated God.
 Bunches of lights reflect upon the pavement where
 The twenty benches stop, and through
 the close, smelled-over air
 Gaunt arches push up their whited
 stones,
 And cover the sparse worshippers with
 dead men's bones.
 Behind his shambling choristers, with
 flattened feet
 And red-flapped hood, the Bishop walks,
 complete
 In old, frayed ceremonial. The organ
 wheezes
 A mouldy psalm-tune, and a verger
 sneezes.
 But the great Cathedral spears into the
 sky
 Shouting for joy.

What is the red-flapped Bishop
 praying for, by the by?

WILLIAM BLAKE

He said he saw the spangled wings of
 angels
 In a tree at Peckham Rye,
 And Elija walking in the haying-fields;
 So they beat him for his lies,
 And 'prenticed him to an engraver.
 Now his books sell for broad, round,
 golden guineas.
 That's a bouncing turn of Fortune!
 But we have the guineas,
 Since our fathers were thrifty men
 And knew the value of gold.

AN INCIDENT

William Blake and Catherine Bouchier
 were married in the newly rebuilt
 Church of Battersea where the win-
 dows were beautifully painted to imi-
 tate real stained glass.

Pigments or crystal, what did it matter —
 when Jehovah sat on a cloud of curled
 fire over the door-way,
 And angels with silver trumpets played
 Hosannas under the wooden groins of
 the peaked roof!
 William and Catherine Blake left the
 painted windows behind in the newly
 rebuilt Church of Battersea.
 But God and the angels went out with
 them;
 And the angels played on their trumpets
 under the plaster ceiling of their
 lodging,
 Morning, and evening, and morning,
 forty-five round years.

Has the paint faded in the windows of
 Battersea Church, I wonder?

PEACH-COLOUR TO A
SOAP-BUBBLE

A man made a symphony
 Out of the chords of his soul.
 The notes ran upon the air like flights of
 chickadees,
 They gathered together and hung
 As bees above a syringa bush,
 They crowded and clicked upon one an-
 other
 In a flurry of progression,
 And crashed in the simultaneous magnifi-
 cence
 Of a grand finale.
 All this he heard,
 But the neighbors heard only the croak
 Of a wheezy, second-hand flageolet.

Forced to seek another lodging
 He took refuge under the arch of a
 bridge,
 For the river below him might be con-
 venient
 Some day.

PYROTECHNICS

I

Our meeting was like the upward swish of
 a rocket
 In the blue night.

I do not know when it burst;
But now I stand gaping,
In a glory of falling stars.

II

Hola! Hola! shouts the crowd, as the
catherine-wheels sputter and turn.
Hola! They cheer the flower-pots and set
pieces.
And nobody heeds the cries of a young
man in shirt-sleeves,
Who has burnt his fingers setting them
off.

III

A King and Queen, and a couple of Gen-
erals,
Flame in coloured lights,
Putting out the stars,
And making a great glare over the people
wandering among the booths.
They are very beautiful and impressive,
And all the people say "Ahl!"
By and by they begin to go out,
Little by little.
The King's crown goes first,
Then his eyes,
Then his nose and chin.
The Queen goes out from the bottom up,
Until only the topmost jewel of her
tiara is left.
Then that too goes;
And there is nothing but a frame of
twisted wires,
With the stars twinkling through it.

THE BOOKSHOP

Pierrot has grown old,
He wore spectacles
And kept a shop.
Opium and hellebore
He sold
Between the covers of books,
And perfumes distilled from the veins of
old ivory,
And poisons drawn from lotus seeds one
hundred years withered
And thinned to the translucence of
alabaster.
He sang a pale song of repeated cadenzas
In a voice cold as flutes
And shrill as desiccated violins.

I stood before the shop,
Fingering the comfortable vellum of an
ancient volume,
Turning over its leaves,
And the dead moon looked over my
shoulder
And fell with a green smoothness upon
the page.
I read:
"I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have
none other gods but me."

Through the door came a chuckle of
laughter
Like the tapping of mstrung kettledrums,
For Pierrot had ceased singing for a mo-
ment
To watch me reading.

CARGOYLES

A COMEDY OF OPPOSITIONS

Thimble-rig on a village green,
Snake-charmers under a blue tent
Winding drugged sausage-bellies through
thin arms.
Hiss
Of a yellow and magenta shawl
On a platform
Above trombones.

Tree lights
Drip cockatoos of colour
On broadest shoulders,
Dead eyes swim to a silver fish.
Gluttonous hands tear at apron strings,
Reach at the red side of an apple,
Slide under ice-floes,
And waltz clear through to the tropics
To sit among cocoanuts
And caress bulbous negresses with loquats
in their hair.

A violin scorching on an F-sharp exit.
Stamp.
Stop.
Hayricks, and panting,
Noon roses guessed under calico —
A budded thorn-bush swinging
Against a smoke-dawn.
Hot pressing on sweet straw,
Laughs like whales floundering across air
circles,
Wallows of smoothness,

Loose muscles dissolved upon lip-brush-
ings,
Languid fluctuations,
Sleep oozing over wet flesh,
Cooling under the broad end of an angled
shadow.
Absurd side-wiggle of geese before ele-
phants;
A gold leopard snarls at a white-nosed
donkey;
Panther-purrs rouse childhood to an edge
of contortion;
Trumpets brawl beneath an oscillation of
green balloons.

Why blow apple-blossoms into wind-
dust?

Why drop a butterfly down the throat of
a pig?

Timid shrinkings of a scarlet-runner bean
From pumpkin roughnesses.

Preposterous clamour of a cock for a
tulip.

If your flesh is cold
Warm it on tea-pots

And let them be of Dresden china

With a coreopsis snarled in the handle.

Horse-bargainings do not become temples,
And sarabands are not danced on tea-
trays of German silver.

Thin drums flatten the uprightness of
distance.

A fading of drums shows lilac on the
fallen beech leaves.

Emptiness of drums.

Nothing.

Burr of a rising moon.

TO WINKY

Cat,

Cat,

What are you?

Son, through a thousand generations, of
the black leopards

Padding among the sprigs of young
bamboo;

Descendant of many removals from the
white panthers

Who crouch by night under the loquat-
trees?

You crouch under the orange begonias,
And your eyes are green

With the violence of murder,

Or half-closed and stealthy
Like your sheathed claws.
Slowly, slowly,
You rise and stretch
In a glossiness of beautiful curves,
Of muscles fluctuating under black,
glazed hair.

Cat,

You are a strange creature.

You sit on your haunches

And yawn,

But when you leap

I can almost hear the whine

Of a released string,

And I look to see its flaccid shaking

In the place whence you sprang.

You carry your tail as a banner,

Slowly it passes my chair,

But when I look for you, you are on the
table

Moving easily among the most delicate
porcelains.

Your food is a matter of importance

And you are insistent on having

Your wants attended to,

And yet you will eat a bird and its
feathers

Apparently without injury.

In the night, I hear you crying,

But if I try to find you

There are only the shadows of rhododen-
dron leaves

Brushing the ground.

When you come in out of the rain,

All wet and with your tail full of burrs,

You fawn upon me in coils and subtleties;

But once you are dry

You leave me with a gesture of incon-
ceivable impudence,

Conveyed by the vanishing quirk of your
tail

As you slide through the open door.

You walk as a king scorning his subjects;
You flirt with me as a concubine in robes

of silk.

Cat,

I am afraid of your poisonous beauty,

I have seen you torturing a mouse.

Yet when you lie purring in my lap

I forget everything but how soft you are,

And it is only when I feel your claws
 open upon my hand
 That I remember —
 Remember a puma lying out on a branch
 above my head
 Years ago.

Shall I choke you, Cat,
 Or kiss you?
 Really I do not know.

CHOPIN .

The cat and I
 Together in the sultry night
 Waited.
 He greatly desired a mouse;
 I, an idea.
 Neither ambition was gratified.
 So we watched
 In a stiff and painful expectation.
 Little breezes pattered among the trees,
 And thin stars ticked at us
 Faintly,
 Exhausted pulses
 Squeezing through mist.

Those others, I said!
 And my mind rang hollow as I tapped it.
 Winky, I said,
 Do all other cats catch their mice?

It was low and long,
 Ivory white, with doors and windows blot-
 ting blue upon it.
 Wind choked in pomegranate-trees,
 Rain rattled on lead roofs,
 And stuttered along twisted conduit-
 pipes.
 An eagle screamed out of the heavy sky,
 And some one in the house screamed
 "Ah, I knew that you were dead!"

So that was it:
 Funeral chants,
 And the icy cowl of buried monks;
 Organs on iron midnights,
 And long wax winding-sheets
 Cuttured from altar candles.
 First this,
 Then spitting blood.
 Music quenched in blood,
 Flights of arpeggios confused by blood,
 Flute-showers of notes stung and ar-
 rested on a sharp chord,

Tangled in a web of blood.
 "I cannot send you the manuscripts, as
 they are not yet finished.
 I have been ill as a dog.
 My illness has had a pernicious effect on
 the Preludes
 Which you will receive God knows
 when."

He bore it.
 Therefore, Winky, drink some milk
 And leave the mouse until to-morrow.
 There are no blood-coloured pomegranate
 flowers
 Hurling their petals in at the open win-
 dow,
 But you can sit in my lap
 And blink at a bunch of cinnamon-cyed
 coreopsis
 While I pull your ears
 In the manner which you find so infinitely
 agreeable.

APPULDURCOMBE PARK

I am a woman, sick for passion,
 Sitting under the golden beech-trees.
 I am a woman, sick for passion,
 Crumbling the beech leaves to powder in
 my fingers.
 The servants say: "Yes, my Lady," and
 "No, my Lady."
 And all day long my husband calls me
 From his invalid chair:
 "Mary, Mary, where are you, Mary? I
 want you."
 Why does he want me?
 When I come, he only pats my hand
 And asks me to settle his cushions.
 Poor little beech leaves,
 Slowly falling,
 Crumbling,
 In the great park.
 But there are many golden beech leaves
 And I am alone.

I am a woman, sick for passion,
 Walking between rows of painted tulips.
 Parrot flowers, toucan-feathered flowers,
 How bright you are!
 You hurt me with your colours,
 Your reds and yellows lance at me like
 flames.
 Oh, I am sick — sick —

And your darting loveliness hurts my heart.

You burn me with your parrot-tongues.

Flame!

Flame!

My husband taps on the window with his stick:

"Mary, come in. I want you. You will take cold."

I am a woman, sick for passion,
Gazing at a white moon hanging over tall lilies.

The lilies sway and darken,

And a wind ruffles my hair.

There is a scrape of gravel behind me.

A red coat crashes scarlet against the lilies.

"Cousin-Captain!

I thought you were playing piquet with Sir Kenelm."

"Piquet, Dear Heart! And such a moon!"

Your red coat chokes me, Cousin-Captain.

Blood-colour, your coat:

I am sick — sick — for your heart.

Keep away from me, Cousin-Captain.

Your scarlet coat dazzles and confuses me.

O heart of red blood, what shall I do!

Even the lilies blow for the bee.

Does your heart beat so loud, Beloved?

No, it is the tower-clock chiming eleven.

I must go in and give my husband his posset.

I hear him calling:

"Mary, where are you? I want you."

I am a woman, sick for passion,
Waiting in the long, black room for the funeral procession to pass.

I sent a messenger to town last night.

When will you come?

Under my black dress a rose is blooming.

A rose? — a heart? — it rustles for you with open petals.

Come quickly, Dear,

For the corridors are full of noises.

In this fading light I hear whispers,

And the steady, stealthy purr of the wind.

What keeps you, Cousin-Captain? . . .

What was that?

"Mary, I want you."

Nonsense, he is dead,

Buried by now.

Oh, I am sick of these long, cold corridors!

Sick — for what?

Why do you not come?

I am a woman, sick — sick —

Sick of the touch of cold paper,

Poisoned with the bitterness of ink,

Snowflakes hiss, and scratch the windows.

"Mary, where are you?"

That voice is like water in my ears;

I cannot empty them.

He wanted me, my husband,

But these stone parlours do not want me.

You do not want me either, Cousin-Captain.

Your coat lied,

Only your white sword spoke the truth.

"Mary! Mary!"

Will nothing stop the white snow

Sifting,

Sifting?

Will nothing stop that voice,

Drifting through the wide, dark halls?

The tower-clock strikes eleven dully,

stifled with snow.

Softly over the still snow,

Softly over the lonely park,

Softly . . .

Yes, I have only my slippers, but I shall not take cold.

A little dish of posset.

Do the dead eat?

I have done it so long,

So strangely long.

THE BROKEN FOUNTAIN

Oblong, its juttred ends rounding into circles,

The old sunken basin lies with its flat, marble lip

An inch below the terrace tiles.

Over the stagnant water

Slide reflections:

The blue-green of coned yews;

The purple and red of trailing fuchsias

Dripping out of marble urns;

Bright squares of sky

Ribbed by the wake of a swimming beetle.

Through the blue-bronze water

Wavers the pale uncertainty of a shadow.

An arm flashes through the reflections,

A breast is outlined with leaves.

Outstretched in the quiet water
The statue of a Goddess slumbers.
But when Autumn comes
The beech leaves cover her with a
golden counter-pane.

THE DUSTY HOUR-GLASS

It had been a trim garden,
With parterres of fringed pinks and
gillyflowers,
and smooth-raked walks,
Silks and satins had brushed the box
edges
of its alleys.
The curved stone lips of its fishponds
had held the rippled reflections of
tricornes and powdered periwigs.
The branches of its trees had glittered
with lanterns,
and swayed to the music of flutes
and violins.

Now, the fishponds are green with scum;
The paths and flower-beds
are run together and overgrown.
Only at one end is an octagonal Summer-
house
not yet in ruins.

Through the lozenged panes of its win-
dows,
you can see the interior:
A dusty bench; a fireplace
with a lacing of letters carved in
the stone above it;
A broken ball of worsted
rolled away into a corner.

Dolci, dolci, i giorni passati!

THE FLUTE

"Stop! What are you doing?"
"Playing on an old flute."
"That's Heine's flute—you mustn't
touch it."
"Why not, if I can make it sound."
"I don't know why not, but you
mustn't."
"I don't believe I can—much. It's
full of dust. Still, listen":

The rose moon whitens the lifting
leaves.
Heigh-o! The nightingale sings!

Through boughs and branches the
moon-thread weaves.
Ancient as time are these midnight
things.

The nightingale's notes over-bubble the
night.
Heigh-o! Yet the night is so big!
He stands on his nest in a wafer of
light,
And the nest was once a philosopher's
wig.

Moon-sharp needles, and dew on the
grass.
Heigh-o! It flickers, the breezel
Kings, philosophers, periwigs pass;
Nightingale eggs hatch under the trees.

Wigs, and pigs, and kings, and courts.
Heigh-o! Rain on the flower!
The old moon thinks her white, bright
thoughts,
And trundles away before the shower.

"Well, you got it to play."

"Yes, a little. And it has lovely silver
mountings."

FLOTSAM

She sat in a Chinese wicker chair
Wide at the top like a spread peacock's
tail,
And toyed with a young man's heart
which she held lightly in her fingers.
She tapped it gently,
Held it up to the sun and looked through
it,
Strung it on a chain of seed-pearls and
fastened it about her neck,
Tossed it into the air and caught it,
Deftly, as though it were a ball.
Before her on the grass sat the young
man.
Sometimes he felt an ache where his
heart had been.
But he brushed it aside.
He was intent on gazing, and had no
time for anything else.
Presently she grew tired and handed him
back his heart,
But he only laid it on the ground beside
him
And went on gazing.

When the maidservant came to tidy up,
She found the heart on the grass.

"What a pretty thing," said the maidservant,

"It is red as a ruby!"

So she picked it up,

And carried it into the house,

And ran a ribbon through it,

And hung it on the looking-glass in her bedroom.

There it hung for many days,
Banging back and forth as the wind blew it.

LITTLE IVORY FIGURES PULLED WITH STRING

Is it the tinkling of mandolins which disturb you?

Or the dropping of bitter-orange petals among the coffee-cups?

Or the slow creeping of the moonlight between the olive-trees?

*Drop! drop! the rain
Upon the thin plates of my heart.*

String your blood to chord with this music,

Stir your heels upon the cobbles to the rhythm of a dance-tune.

They have slim thighs and arms of silver;

The moon washes away their garments;

They make a pattern of fleeing feet in the branch shadows,

And the green grapes knotted about them
Burst as they press against one another.

*The rain knocks upon the
plates of my heart,
They are crumpled with its beating.*

Would you drink only from your brains,
Old Man?

See, the moonlight has reached your knees,

It falls upon your head in an accolade of silver.

Rise up on the music,

Fling against the moon-drifts in a whirl
of young light bodies:

Leaping grape clusters,

Vine leaves tearing from a grey wall.

You shall run, laughing, in a braid of women,

And weave flowers with the frosty spines of thorns.

Why do you gaze into your glass,

And jar the spoons with your finger-tapping?

*The rain is rigid on the plates
of my heart.*

*The murmur of it is loud —
loud.*

ON THE MANTELPIECE

A thousand years went to her making,

A thousand years of experiments in pastes and glazes.

But now she stands

In all the glory of the finest porcelain and the most delicate paint,

A Dresden china shepherdess,

Flaunted before a tall mirror

On a high mantelpiece.

"Beautiful shepherdess,

I love the little pink rosettes on your shoes,

The angle of your hat sets my heart a-singing.

Drop me the purple rose you carry in your hand

That I may cherish it,

And that, at my death,

Which I feel is not far off,

It may lie upon my bier."

So the shepherdess threw the purple rose over the mantelpiece,

But it splintered in fragments on the hearth.

Then from below there came a sound of weeping,

And the shepherdess beat her hands

And cried:

"My purple rose is broken,

It was the flower of my heart."

And she jumped off the mantelpiece

And was instantly shattered into seven hundred and twenty pieces.

But the little brown cricket who sang so sweetly

Scuttled away into a crevice of the marble

And went on warming his toes and chirping.

As Toward War

MISERICORDIA

He earned his bread by making wooden
soldiers,
With beautiful golden instruments,
Riding dapple-grey horses,
But when he heard the fanfare of trum-
pets
And the long rattle of drums
As the army marched out of the city,
He took all his soldiers
And burned them in the grate;
And that night he fashioned a ballet-
dancer
Out of tinted tissue paper,
And the next day he started to carve a
Pietà
On the steel hilt
Of a cavalry sword.

DREAMS IN WAR TIME

I

I wandered through a house of many
rooms.
It grew darker and darker,
Until, at last, I could only find my
way
By passing my fingers along the wall.
Suddenly my hand shot through an open
window,
And the thorn of a rose I could not see
Pricked it so sharply
That I cried aloud.

II

I dug a grave under an oak-tree.
With infinite care, I stamped my spade
Into the heavy grass.
The sod sucked it,
And I drew it out with effort,
Watching the steel run liquid in the
moonlight
As it came clear.
I stooped, and dug, and never turned,
For behind me,
On the dried leaves,
My own face lay like a white pebble,
Waiting.

III

I gambled with a silver money.
The dried seed-vessels of "honesty"
Were stacked in front of me.
Dry, white years slipping through my
fingers
One by one.
One by one, gathered by the Croupier.
"Faites vos jeux, Messieurs."
I staked on the red,
And the black won.
Dry years,
Dead years;
But I had a system,
I always staked on the red.

IV

I painted the leaves of bushes red
And shouted: "Fire! Fire!"
But the neighbors only laughed.
"We cannot warm our hands at them,"
they said.
Then they cut down my bushes,
And made a bonfire,
And danced about it.
But I covered my face and wept,
For ashes are not beautiful
Even in the dawn.

V

I followed a procession of singing girls
Who danced to the glitter of tambourines.
Where the street turned at a lighted
corner,
I caught the purple dress of one of the
dancers,
But, as I grasped, it tore,
And the purple dye ran from it
Like blood
Upon the ground.

VI

I wished to post a letter,
But although I paid much,
Still the letter was overweight.
"What is in this package?" said the
clerk,
"It is very heavy."

"Yes," I said,
 "And yet it is only dried fruit."

VII

I had made a kite,
 On it I had pasted golden stars
 And white torches,
 And the tail was spotted scarlet like a
 tiger-lily,
 And very long.
 I flew my kite,
 And my soul was contented
 Watching it flash against the concave of
 the sky.
 My friends pointed at the clouds;
 They begged me to take in my kite.
 But I was happy
 Seeing the mirror shock of it
 Against the black clouds.
 Then the lightening came
 And struck the kite.
 It puffed — blazed — fell.
 But still I walked on,
 In the drowning rain,
 Slowly winding up the string.

SPECTACLES

He was a landscape architect.

All day he planned Dutch gardens: rectangular, squared with tulips; Italian gardens: dark with myrtle, thick with running water; English gardens: prim, box-edged, espaliered fruit trees flickering on walls, borders of snap-dragons, pansies, marjoram, rue.

On Saturday afternoons, he did not walk into the country. He paid a quarter and went to a cinema show, and gazed — gazed — at marching soldiers, at guns firing and recoiling, at waste grounds strewn with mutilated dead. When he took off his glasses, there was moisture upon them, and his eyes hurt. He could not see to use a periscope, they said, yet he could draw gardens.

His firm dismissed him for designing a military garden: forts, and redoubts, and salients, in hemlock and yew, and a puzzle of ditches, damp, deep, floored with forget-me-nots. It was a wonderful thing, but quite mad, of course.

When they took his body from the river,
 the eyes were wide open, and the lids
 were so stiffened that they buried him
 without closing them.

IN THE STADIUM

MARSHAL JOFFRE REVIEWING THE
 HARVARD REGIMENT, MAY 12, 1917

A little old man
 Huddled up in a corner of a carriage,
 Rapidly driven in front of throngs of
 people
 With his hand held to a perpetual salute.
 The people cheer,
 But he has heard so much cheering.
 On his breast is a row of decorations.
 He feels his body recoil before attacks of
 pain.

They are all like this:
 Napoleon,
 Hannibal,
 Great Caesar even,
 But that he died out of time.
 Sick old men,
 Driving rapidly before a concourse of
 people,
 Gay with decorations,
 Crumpled with pain.

The drum-major lifts his silver-headed
 stick,
 And the silver trumpets and tubas,
 The great round drums,
 Each with an H on them,
 Crash out martial music.
 Heavily rhythmed march music
 For the stepping of a regiment.

Slant lines of rifles,
 A twinkle of stepping,
 The regiment comes.
 The young regiment,
 Boys in khaki
 With slanted rifles.
 The young bodies of boys
 Bulwarked in front of us.
 The white bodies of young men
 Heaped like sandbags
 Against the German guns.

This is war:
 Boy flung into a breach
 Like shovelled earth;

And old men,
Broken,
Driving rapidly before crowds of people
In a glitter of silly decorations.

Behind the boys
And the old men,
Life weeps,
And shreds her garments
To the blowing winds.

AFTER WRITING "THE BRONZE HORSES"

I am so tired.
I have run across the ages with spiritless
feet,
I have tracked man where he falls splint-
ered in defeat,
I have watched him shoot up like green
sprouts at dawning,
I have seen him blossom, and fruit, and
offer himself, fawning,
On golden platters to kings.
I have seen him reel with drunk blood,
I have followed him in flood
Sweep over his other selves.
I have written things
Which sucked the breath
Out of my lungs, and hung
My heart up in a frozen death.
I have picked desires
Out of purple fires
And set them on the shelves
Of my mind,
Nonchalantly,
As though my kind
Were unlike these.
But while I did this, by bowels contracted
in twists of fear,
I felt myself squeeze
Myself dry,
And wished that I could shrivel before
Destiny
Could snatch me back into the vortex of
Yesterday.
Wheels and wheels —
And only your hand is firm.
The very paths of my garden squirm
Like snakes between the brittle flowers,
And the sunrise gun cuts off the hours
Of this day and the next.
The long, dusty volumes are the first of
a text.
Oh, Beloved, must we read?

Must you and I, alone in the midst of
trees,
See their green alleys printing with the
screed
Which counts these new men, these
Terrible resurrections of old wars.
I wish I had not seen so much:
The roses that you wear are bloody scars,
And you the moon above a battle-field;
So all my thoughts are grown to such.
A body peeled
Down to a skeleton,
A grinning jaw-bone in a bed of mignon-
ette.
What good is it to say "Not yet."
I tell you I am tired
And afraid.

THE FORT

The disappearing guns
Are hidden in their concrete emplace-
ments,
But, above them,
Meadow grasses fall and recover,
Bend and stiffen,
Go dark, burn light,
In the play of gusty wind.
A black-and-orange butterfly
Flits about the butter-and-egg flowers,
And the sea stands up,
Tall in perspective,
With full-spread schooners
Sprinkled upon it
As roses are powdered
Over a ribbon of moiré blue.
The disappearing guns are black
In grey concrete emplacements
With here and there a touch of red rust.

Wind cuts through the grasses,
Rasps upon them,
Draws a bow note out along them.
Swish! — Oh-h-h!
And the low waves
Crash soft constant cymbals
On the shingle beach
At the foot of the cliff.
Good gracious!
A seal!
After how many years?
He turns his head to look at us,
He lolls on his rock contented and hot
with sun.

The disappearing guns would shoot over
him
If they were to fire.
Is he held in the harbour
By the submarine nets, I wonder?

"You turn the crank so.
Do you see her move?
If you stand here, you can see the springs
for the recoil."
Perhaps I can,
But I cannot see the orange butterfly,
Nor the seal,
Nor the little ships
Drawn across the tall, streaked sea.
And all I can hear
Is the jingle of a piano
In the men's quarters
Playing a comic opera tune.

Is it possible that, at night,
The little flutter-bats
Hang under the lever-wheels of the dis-
appearing guns
In their low emplacements
To escape from the glare
Of the search-lights.
Shooting over the grasses
To the sea?

CAMOUFLAGED TROOP-SHIP

BOSTON HARBOUR

Uprightness,
Masts, one behind another,
Syncopated beyond and between one an-
other,
Clonding together,
Becoming confused.
A mist of grey, blurring stems
Platformed upon horizontal thicknesses.
Decks,
Rows and sterns escaping fore and aft,
A long line of flatness
Darker than the fog of masts,
More solid,
Monotonous grey.
Dull smokestacks
Plotting intricate clouds.
An ebb-tide
Slowly sucking the refuse of a harbour
Seaward.

The ferry turns;
And there.

On the starboard quarter,
Thrust out from the vapour-wall of ships:
Colour.
Against the perpendicular:
Obliqueness.
In front of the horizontal:
A crenelated edge.
A vessel, grooved and conical,
Shell-shaped, flower-flowing,
Gothic, bizarre, and unrelated.
Black spirals over cream-colour
Broken at a half-way point.
A slab of black amidships.
At the stern,
Lines:
Rising from the water,
Curled round and over,
Whorled, scattered,
Drawn upon one another.
Snakes starting from a still ocean,
Writhing over cream-colour,
Crashed upon and cut down
By a flat, impinging horizon.

The sea is grey and low,
But the vessel is high with upthrusting
lines:
Hair lines incessantly moving,
Broad bands of black turning evenly over
emptiness,
Intorting upon their circuits,
Teasing the eye with indefinite motion,
Coming from nothing,
Ending without cessation.
Drowned hair drifting against mother-of-
pearl;
Kelp-aprons
Shredded upon a yellow beach;
Black spray
Salted over cream-grey wave-tops.

You hollow into rising water,
You double-turn under the dripped edges
of clouds,
You move in a hundred directions,
And keep to a course the eye cannot see.
Your terrible lines
Are swift as the plunge of a kingfisher;
They vanish as one traces them,
They are constantly vanishing,
And yet you swing at anchor in the grey
harbour
Waiting for your quota of troops.
Men will sail in you,
Netted in whirling paint,

Held like brittle eggs
In an osier basket.
They will sail,
Over black-skinned water,
Into a distance of cream-colour and
vague shadow-shotted blue.

The ferry whistle blows for the landing.
Start the engine
That we may not block
The string of waiting carts.

SEPTEMBER, 1918

This afternoon was the colour of water
falling through sunlight;
The trees glittered with the tumbling of
leaves;
The sidewalks shone like alleys of dropped
maple leaves,
And the houses ran along them laughing
out of square, open windows.
Under a tree in the park,
Two little boys, lying flat on their faces,
Were carefully gathering red berries
To put in a pasteboard box.

Some day there will be no war,
Then I shall take out this afternoon
And turn it in my fingers,
And remark the sweet taste of it upon my
palate,
And note the crisp variety of its flights of
leaves.
To-day I can only gather it
And put it into my lunch-box,
For I have time for nothing
But the endeavour to balance myself
Upon a broken world.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE PARADE

April 25, 1919

Birds are calling through the rain,
Glass bells dropping across the patter of
falling rain.
The garden soaks, and breathes, and lifts
up the spear-green leaves of tulips
And the long, golden mouths of daffodils
To the downpour,
And the high blossoms of forsythia
Tremble vaguely, and bend to let the
rain run off them
And spill over the little red peony fronds
Uncurling at their feet.

It is wet, and cool, and pleasant.
Why should words rattle upon this quiet-
ness?
"Adders writhe from the sunken
eyes
Of statues, in Persepolis."

Clashes of bells bursting in a grey sky,
And a clock striking jubiles of brass
hours, one after another.
Gas-jets flicker, and spin sudden lights
across the battle-flags draped to
the pillars.

The church sighs in the evening rain,
Kneeling beneath the dim clouds in a
stillness of adoration.
Beauty of stone, of glass, of memories,
Worshipful beauty spotted by the snarl
of words—
"Adders writhe from the sunken
eyes
Of statues, in Persepolis."

They have put up stands,
Flimsy wooden stands to crush out the
little green life of the grass.
To-morrow the crowds will cheer,
And the streets will shine with flags and
gilding.
The people will shout themselves hoarse
When the green helmets and the white
bayonets
Sweep along the streets.
Only the little grass-blades will cry and
languish,
Weeping: "We are the cousins of the
grasses of France,
The kind grasses who cover the graves of
those you have forgotten."
Then they will hiss under the cruel stands,
And the words will run, and glare, and
brighten:
"Adders writhe from the sunken
eyes
Of statues, in Persepolis."

Rain on a roofless city,
Rain over broken walls and towers scat-
tered to a ring of ruins,
Pale splendours of hard stone melted to
the purple bloom of orchises,
And poppies thrust between the basalt
paving-blocks of roads leading to
a waste of blue-tongued thistles.

Where did I see this?
 Not in the leafless branches of the ash-
 tree,
 Not in the glitter of my wet window-sill,
 Not in the smooth garden filling itself
 with good rain.
 There are fireworks to-night,
 The first for two years,
 And listen to the rain!

Listen — listen —
 Prayers, and flowers, and a booming of
 guns.
 It blurs —
 Do I hear anything?
 What are you reading?
 "Adders writhe from the sunken
 eyes
 Of statues, in Persepolis."

As Toward Immortality

ON A CERTAIN CRITIC

Well, John Keats,
 I know how you felt when you swung out
 of the inn
 And started up Box Hill after the moon.
 Lord! How she twinkled in and out of
 the box bushes
 Where they arched over the path.
 How she pecked at you and tempted you,
 And how you longed for the "naked
 waist" of her
 You had put into your second canto.
 You felt her silver running all over you,
 And the shine of her flashed in your eyes
 So that you stumbled over roots and
 things.
 Ah! How beautiful! How beautiful!
 Lying out on the open hill
 With her white radiance touching you
 Lightly,
 Flecking over you.
 "My Lady of the Moon,
 I flow out to your whiteness,
 Brightness.
 My hands cup themselves
 About your disk of pearl and fire;
 Lie upon my face,
 Burn me with the cold of your hot white
 flame.
 Diana,
 High, distant Goddess,
 I kiss the needles of this furze bush
 Because your feet have trodden it.
 Moon!
 Moon!
 I am prone before you.
 Pity me,
 And drench me in loveliness.
 I have written you a poem
 I have made a girdle for you of words;

Like a shawl my words will cover you,
 So that men may read of you and not be
 burnt as I have been.
 Sere my heart until it is a crinkled leaf,
 I have held you in it for a moment,
 And exchanged my love with yours,
 On a high hill at midnight.
 Was that your tear or mine, Bright
 Moon?
 It was round and full of moonlight.
 Don't go!
 My God! Don't go!
 You escape from me,
 You slide through my hands.
 Great Immortal Goddess,
 Dearly Beloved,
 Don't leave me.
 My hands clutch at moonbeams,
 And catch each other.
 My Dear! My Dear!
 My beautiful far-shining lady!
 Oh! God!
 I am tortured with this anguish of un-
 bearable beauty."

Then you stumbled down the hill, John
 Keats,
 Perhaps you fell once or twice;
 It is a rough path,
 And you weren't thinking of that.
 Then you wrote,
 By a wavering candle,
 And the moon frosted your window till it
 looked like a sheet of blue ice.
 And as you tumbled into bed, you said:
 "It's a piece of luck I thought of coming
 out to Box Hill."

Now comes a sprig little gentleman,
 And turns over your manuscript with his
 mincing fingers,

And tabulates places and dates.
He says your moon was a copy-book
maxim,
And talks about the spirit of solitude,
And the salvation of genius through the
social order.
I wish you were here to damn him

With a good, round, agreeable oath,
John Keats,
But just snap your fingers,
You and the moon will still love,
When he and his papers have slithered
away
In the bodies of innumerable worms.

LEGENDS

MEMORANDUM CONFIDED BY A YUCCA TO A PASSION-VINE

The Turkey-buzzard was chatting with
the Condor
High up in the White Cordillera.
"Surely our friend the fox is mad," said
he.

"He chases birds no more and his tail
trails languidly
Behind him in the dust.

Why, he got it full of cactus-spines one
day,

Pawing over a plant that stood in his
way.

All the bees are buzzing about it.
Consider a fox who passes by the great
hives of sharp, black honey

And looks at them no more than a heron
would."

"Odd," said the Condor. "Remarkably
peculiar."

And he flapped his wings and flew away
to the porcelain peaks of the distant
Sierra.

So the Turkey-buzzard thought no more
of the matter,

But busied himself with the carcass of
a dead llama,

And the sun boomed onward over the
ice-peaks;

Hot — Hot — Hotter!

And the sun dropped behind the snow-
peaks,

And the cool of shadow was so delicious
that all the squirrels and rabbits and
peccaries and lizards

Flirted their tails;

And the flamingoes in Lake Titicaca
puffed out their gizzards,

And waded into the pink water reflected
from the carmine-tinted mountain
summits;

And the parrots chattered and flashed in
the mimosas;

And the eagles dove like plummetts
Upon the unfortunate alpacas.

The animals were enjoying themselves in
the rose-red light that lingers

Flung from the blood-orchid tips of the
mountains

Before the night mists slide over the
foothills.

Ah! But you could see them in the valleys,
Floating and circling like dead men's
fingers

Combing living hair.

In a place of bright quartz rocks,

Sits a small red fox.

He is half in the shade of a cactus-bush.

The birds still fly, but there is a hush

And a sifting of purple through the air:
Blue dims rose,

The evening is fair.

Why is the red fox waiting there,

With his sniffing nose,

And his stiffened pose,

And his narrow eyelids which never close?

"Fox — fox —

Against the rocks.

Are you rooted there till the equinox?"

So the alcamarines flocking home in the
afterglow

Mock the poor fox, but he doesn't seem
to know.

He sits on his haunches, staring high

Into the soft, fruit-green evening sky.

A yellow rose blooms in the glow,

Thin fox frosted by silver snow,

Mica-crystals flecking over indigo.

And a cactus-tree

Grating its thorn-leaves huskily.

Moan of wind and the crackles of an
empty place

At the coming of night.

The fox is alone.

Then in the far green heavens the lady
rises, tall and white.

August and dazzling

In the drooping light,

She shimmers, jubilantly bright.
 Breasts and thighs tuned to liquid air,
 Loveliness set naked in a firmament.
 He sees the slim, smooth arms,
 And the virgin waist bending with delicate movement.
 Her body sways as a flower stem
 Caught in a gust;
 And her hair is thrust
 Towards him, he can see the gem
 Which binds it loosely. His eyes are greedy
 Of the curving undulations and straight fall
 Following down from head to foot, and all
 Cool and unclouded, touching him almost.
 With hot tongue he pants upon the splendour
 Of this marble beauty, imperious and unshamed
 In her extreme of excellence.
 Then he weeps,
 Weeps in little yelping barks for the cold beautiful body
 Of the inaccessible moon.
 The villagers wake in a startled fright
 And tell each other: "A fox bays the moon to-night."

The moon lives in Cuzco —
 It was the Partridge who told him so —
 In a temple builded of jointured stone
 On an emerald-studded, silver throne.
 So the fox set out for Cuzco with his tail
 held high to keep it out of the dust.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!
 What is that noise approaching him?
 Quick, behind a stone,
 And he watches them come,
 The soldiers of the great Inca.
 Copper spear-heads running like a river
 of gold along the road.
 Helmets of tiger-skins, coats of glittering
 feathers,
 A ripple of colours from one edge of the
 way to the other.
 Feet of men cadenced to the swing of
 weapons.
 So many bows, and arrows, and slings,
 And darts, and lances,
 A twinkling rhythm of reflections to
 which the army advances,

And a rainbow banner flickering colours
 to the slipping of the wind.
 They pass as water passes and the fox is
 left behind.

"Those men come from Cuzco," thought
 the fox,

And his heart was like lead in his stomach
 for wondering if they knew the moon.
 Then he trotted on again with his tail
 held high to keep it out of the dust,

Pat! Pat! Pat!

What is that sound behind him?
 He leaps into a bush of tufted acacia just
 in time.

It is a post-runner, doing his stint of five
 miles,

Carrying merchandise from the coast.
 And the fox's mouth waters as he smells
 fish:

Bobos, shads, sardines,
 All fading in a little osier basket,
 Faint colours whispering the hues of the
 rainbow flag.

But the runner must not lag,
 These fish are for the Inca's table.
 A flash of feet against the heart-shaped
 flowers of the yolosuchil
 And the jarred leaves settle and are still.
 The fox creeps out and resumes his journey,
 with his tail held high to keep it
 out of the dust.

Over bush and bramble and prick and
 thorn

Goes the fox, till his feet are torn,
 And his eyes are weary with keeping the
 trail

Through ashen wind and clattering hail,
 With the hot, round sun lying flat on his
 head,

And morning crushing its weight of lead
 On scores of trumpet-vines tangled and
 dead.

Across swung bridges of plaited reeds
 In a whorl of foaming, bursting beads
 Of river mist, where a cañon makes a
 fall

Of thousands of feet in a sheer rock wall.
 Pomegranates toss him scarlet petals,
 The little covetous claws of nettles
 Catch at his fur, and a sudden gloom
 Blocks his path on a drip of bloom.
 Over prick and thorn and bush and bramble;

Up pointed boulders with a slip and
 scramble,
 Past geese with flattened, blue-green
 wings
 Pulling the ichu grass which springs
 In narrow fissures where nothing else
 clings;
 Through terraced fields of bright-tongued
 maize
 Licking the hills to a golden blaze;
 Under clustered bananas and scented
 oaks;
 Across dry, high plains where the yucca
 chokes.
 Dawns explode in bleeding lights
 On the snow-still uplands of ghastly
 heights
 Where long-dead bodies stare through
 their hair
 Crooking their brittle legs and bare
 Ice-tortured arms, and the sun at noon
 Is a glassy shell of dull maroon.
 Only at night he watches the moon
 Stepping along the smooth, pale sky
 In a silver florescence. By and by
 The red fox reaches the gates of Cuzco,
 But his tail is very much bedraggled for he
 can no longer hold it up out of the
 dust.

Morning playing dimly in the passion-
 vines
 Hanging over the gates of Cuzco.
 Morning picking out a purple flower —
 Another — another —
 Cascading down the walls of Cuzco.
 Scarlet-flashing, uprose the sun
 With one deep bell-note of a copper-
 crashed gong.
 Glory of rose-mist over the Sierra,
 Glory of crimson on the tinted turrets
 Of the wide old fort under the high cliff.
 Glory of vermilion dripping from the
 windows,
 Glory of saffron streaking all the shadows,
 House fronts glaring in fresh young light,
 Gold over Cuzco!
 Gold!
 Gold!
 In an orchid flow,
 Where the Temple of Pachacamac rose
 like a bell
 Shining on the city,
 With the clear sweet swell of an open
 sunrise gong.

White and carnation,
 White and carnation,
 The sun's great gnomon,
 Measuring its shadow on the long sharp
 gold polished grass.
 Who pass here
 In an early year?
 Lightning and Thunder,
 Servants of the Sun.
 Lord of the rainbow's white and purple,
 Blue and carnation,
 All awhirl to a curl of gold.
 He who comes from the land of monkeys,
 He who comes from the flying-fishes
 playing games with rainbow dolphins,
 Pause —
 Here before the gates of gold,
 Chamfered crown about the Temple,
 Sparkling points and twisted spirals,
 All of Gold.
 Lemon-tinted Gold,
 Red-washed fire Gold,
 Gold, the planking,
 Gold, the roof-tree,
 Gold the burnished doors and porches,
 And the chairs of the dead Incas:
 One long row of stately bodies
 Sitting dead in all the dazzle
 Glittering with bright green emeralds.
 White-haired Incas,
 Hoary Incas,
 Black and shiny-haired young Incas,
 All dead Incas;
 With their hands crossed on their breasts
 And their eyes cast down, they wait
 there.
 Terrible and full-fleshed Incas.
 Blaze of fire, burning, glaring,
 Bright, too bright!
 Ah-h-h!
 The Sun!
 Up through the wide-open Eastern portal.
 Broken, sharpened on a thousand plates
 of gold,
 It falls,
 Splintered into prisms on the rainbow
 walls.
 The Sun steps into his house.
 Hush! It is the PRESENCE!

Face of Pachacamac,
 Wreathed in burnished flames of swift
 fire.
 Then on the wind of a thousand voices
 rises the hymn:

"Pachacamac
 World's Creator,
 Mountain-mover,
 Heaven-dwelling.
 We beseech thee
 Send thy showers,
 Warm our meadows,
 Bless the seed ears.
 Man and woman,
 Beast and lizard,
 Feathered people,
 Whales and fishes,
 All implore thee,
 Clement God head,
 To make fruitful
 These thy creatures.
 String their sinews
 Ripe for power,
 Quicken wombs and
 Eggs and rootlets.
 Be the Father,
 The Begetter.
 Pour upon us,
 Lord of all things,
 Of thy bounty,
 Of thy fulness.
 So we praise thee,
 Swelling Apple,
 Gourd of Promise,
 Mighty Melon,
 Seed-cucaser,
 Sun and Spirit,
 Lord of Morning,
 Blood of Mercy,
 Pachacamac!"

And the great tide of men's voices echoed
 and curved upon the plates of gold
 lining the Temple
 So that it became a wide horn of melody,
 And out of it burst the hymn like a red-
 streaked lily thundering to the morning.
 Men's voices singing the hymn of open-
 ing seed,
 Men's voices raised in a phallic chorus to
 the rising sun . . .
 Virgin of the sun,
 Pale Virgin,
 Through the twisting vine-leaves it comes
 to you broken and shivering.
 What are you, Virgin?
 And who is this all-wise God
 That shuts you in a hall of stone?
 Cleft asunder,
 A white pomegranate with no seeds,

A peascod dropped on a foot-path before
 its peas are blown.
 Pale Virgin, go about your baking,
 For the shadows shorten and at noon the
 oven will be heated.

Tired little fox outside the fence,
 Lie down in the shade of the wall,
 For indeed the sun has done you an
 injury.

Now the East wind, called Brisa, blew
 against the clouds;
 And the sun rushed up the sky;
 And at noon the shadow of the great
 guomon was not,
 No single dark patch lay anywhere about
 its foot,
 For the God sat with all his light upon
 the column.
 The fox awoke, and sought shelter from
 the heat.
 Creeping, he came to a garden of five
 fountains,
 Set in green plots, and plots of silver.
 For there he saw, mixed, the fruits of
 the sun:
 Apples, quinces, loquats, and chirimoyas,
 All just after flowering with their fruit-
 balls perfectly formed but each smaller
 than a pepper-grain,
 And the fruits of man:
 Oranges, melons, cocoanuts and bread-
 fruit,
 Fashioned of gold and silver,
 Amazing with brightness.
 Indian corn sprouted from the earth on
 thin stalks of gold
 Which rattled against one another with
 a sweet clashing,
 The golden ears escaping smartly out of
 broad recurved leaves of silver,
 And silver tassels floated in a twinkle of
 whiteness from their glittering tops.
 Golden snails clung to silver palm-
 branches,
 Turquoise butterflies flew hither and
 thither
 And one alone remained poised; it was
 of polished stone.
 The fox gaped for wonder and his tail
 lay prone on a silver lizard,
 But this he never noticed.
 Then across the sounds of leaves blowing
 And metals tapping,

Came music;
A voice singing in a minor key,
Throaty and uncertain as a new-cut
reed.

"Mama Quilla," it sang.

"Mother Moon,
Through the shell of heaven gliding,
Moon of many stars and brothers,
Mistress of the bright-haired rainbow,
Wife and sister of the Sun-god,
Virgin moon who bore him children,
If you die then do we perish.
Mama Quilla,
I, a Virgin,
Crave a blessing,
Ask a guerdon.
O glorious, chaste, and immaculate moon,
Preserve me to my vows.
But, I implore thee,
Take from me, therefore, this my long-
ing,

Let the Spring deal with me gently,
Still my spirit.
Or, devout and pitying mother,
Give me thunder,
Give me lightning,
Break me on a green-stone anvil,
So the flower of my body
Blow to loveliness a moment.
I am past my holding, Mama Quilla,
In the night I smell the strong-scented
blossoms of the daturas,
And my heart snares me in its loneli-
ness."

So the fox crept up to the door where
the Virgin of the Sun sat spinning.

"Can you tell me, Lady," said he, making
a fine bow,

"If the moon lives here in Cuzco?"

Then the Virgin was afraid,
For she did not know that foxes spoke.

"Who are you," she demanded,

"And whence do you come?"

"I am a fox of the Western Country,
And I come from the water-passage of
Lake Titicaca.

I love the moon,
I desire her more than the monkeys of
the Eastern forests

Desire dates,
More than your kinsmen, the Incas,

Desire the land of the Machigangas.
She is more beautiful to me than red
pepper-pods

To the shepherds who walk the moun-
tains with their llamas.

I prize her more greatly than do the
Aquarimas the shrunken skulls of their
enemies.

She is a poison-tree of many branches:
With one, she brushes the waves of the
ocean

So that all the shores are overflowed with
the sea at Spring tides;

And, with another, she tickles the nose
of a tapir

Asleep in a grove of vanilla-trees

On the banks of the Amazon;

And I have been blinded by the sweeping
of a bird

Above the snow-cornice on Mount Vil-
canota.

Oh, she has many branches

All dripping with silver-white poison,
And I have come here to drink this
poison and die."

"But you cannot possess the moon;

It is sacrilege," cried the Virgin,

And her hands trembled so that the dis-
taff fell to the ground.

"And it is sacrilege for a Virgin of the
Sun to sing of the labours of women,"
said the fox.

Then the fox told of his watching, night
and night, under the cactus-bush,

Of his great pains and hungering,
And the Virgin listened in a tiptoe of
attention,

While the ruby humming-birds splashed
fire across the silver ripple of the gar-
den,

And the fountains sprang and recoiled,
And the Sun sank behind the mountains
of the sea.

Hush!

Hush!

In the House of Acllahua.

The Mamacunas sleep,

The Virgins lie enmeshed in sleep.

Sleep folded on the House of Acllahua,

While the Sun, their master,

Dries the ocean with his swimming.

West to East, all night he swims,

And they in the House of Acllahua sleep.

Only she is waiting, fearing;

Now more gently, gently, gliding,

Through the fluttering silver flowers.

And the fox is waiting,

Sitting under a tamarisk-tree
 With his hot tongue hanging out of his
 mouth.
 Through the thin cloud of tamarisk-
 leaves
 Falls a tempered moonlight,
 A feathered, partial moonlight,
 A moonlight growing every moment
 stronger,
 A shadow growing every minute blacker.
 The Virgin and the fox under the black
 feathers of the tamarisk-tree,
 While the moon walks with a stately
 slowness
 Down the long, quiet terraces of the sky.

Hush!
 Hush!
 The garden burns with cold, green fire,
 A bat spots black on a gold sweet-briar,
 A polished rose on a stem of wire
 Sweeps and bends, a blue flung ball
 Palpitating,
 Undulating,
 All the trees and plants girating,
 All the metals quivering to song
 And the great palmettos beating gongs.
 The low, slow notes of the water-reeds
 Underscore the glass-sweet beads
 Of the little clapping melon seeds.
 Gold and silver strings of a lyre
 Plucked by the wind, high pitched and
 higher,
 And the silver moans with a tone of its
 own
 Fragile as an ixia newly blown.
 All the garden sways to a noise
 Of humming metal in equipoise.
 Stately dates sweep a merry-go-round,
 The fountains spring in a sparkle of
 sound.
 The moonlight falls in a heap on the
 ground.
 And there is Light!
 Light is a crowned effulgence
 Thrown up from the flowers and trees,
 Delicate, pearly light, barred by beauti-
 ful shadows,
 Bloomed light, plunging upon the silver-
 roofed Temple.
 Open, Open,
 Door of the Temple of the Moon.
 Come forth, dead mothers of dead Incas.
 Slow procession of the dead
 Piling out of the Temple.

Mama Vello, mother of Huayna Capac,
 Mama Runtu,
 Mama Oollo,
 Feathered mantles brush the golden
 gravel,
 Their hands are crossed on their breasts,
 They are powdered with turquoises and
 raw-cut emeralds.
 Slowly the Inca mothers form a ring,
 They hold a golden chain
 Long and broad as the great street of
 Cuzco.
 Slowly they move in a circle,
 Chanting.
 Their steps are soft as weeping water.
 Their voices are faint as snow dropping
 through Autumn dusk.
 Suddenly, in the midst of the ring, a great
 fall of Light.
 It is she — the MOON!
 White mist circumsolves about her,
 On her head is a diadem of opal-changing
 ice,
 And hoar-frost follows the stepping of her
 feet.
 A single emerald, half white, half foaming
 green,
 Clasps a girdle about her waist.
 Terribly she dances in the ring of Inca
 mothers.
 The garden turns with them as they
 move,
 Winding and closing about them,
 Impelling them toward the Temple,
 Up to the Altar.
 Trumpets, brazen and vainglorious,
 Silver-striking, shouting cymbals,
 Open horns, round gourd-drums beaten
 to a rattle of flame.
 Movement, ghostly, perpetual,
 And sound, loud, sweet, sucking from the
 four edges of the sky.
 Everything swings, and sings, and oscil-
 lates, and curves.
 Only the moon upon the High Altar is
 still,
 She stands, struck to immobility,
 Then, without haste, unclasps the foam-
 ing emerald
 And the mists part and fall . . .
 Silence —
 Silence spread beneath her as a footstool.
 The flowers close;
 The Inca mothers are dead corpses on
 their silver thrones.

But She!
 Naked, white, and beautiful,
 Poised and infinite;
 Flesh,
 Spirit,
 Woman and Unparalleled Enchantment.
 Moon of waters,
 Womb of peoples,
 Majesty and highest Queen.
*So the Goddess burns in a halo of white-
 rose fire*
 For an instant . . .
 Yelp! Yelp! Yelp!
 The fox has burst from the Virgin's
 grasp.
 Over the garden,
 Up the aisle of the Temple,
 With staring eyes
 And ghoulish, licking tongue.
 Satyr fox assaulting the moon!
THUNDER!!!
 Lightning serpents
 Wound in great circles above the Tem-
 ple.

Sheets of lightning snarling from racing,
 purple clouds
 And rain roaring down the hot walls of
 a copper sky.

The clouds splinter, and a ruined moon
 wavers up into the heavens, about her
 are three great rings, one of blood, one
 of black, and the utmost all of sting-
 ing, glutinous, intorting coils of smoke.
 Upon the disk of the moon are spots,
 black obscene spots, the print of a
 fox's paws.

Bake your cakes of the sacred maize,
 Virgin,
 Tend the flame the priest has gathered
 with his metal sun-glass,
 Weave feathered mantles for the Coya,
 Burn holy gums to deaden the scent of
 the daturas.
 If you and the moon have a secret,
 Let it rest there.

A LEGEND OF PORCELAIN

Old China sits and broods behind her
 ten-thousand-miles-great wall,
 And the rivers of old China crawl —
 crawl — forever
 Toward the distant, ceaselessly waiting
 seas.

At King-te-chin in China,
 At King-te-chin in the far East of the
 Eighteen Provinces of China,
 Where all day long the porcelain fac-
 tories belch corded smoke,
 And all night long the watch-men, strik-
 ing the hours on their lizard-skin
 drums,
 Follow the shadows thrown before
 them
 From a sky glazed scarlet as it floats over
 the fires of burning kilns —
 At King-te-chin, in the heart of brooding
 China,
 Lives Chou-Kiou,
 White as milk in a tazza cup,
 Red as a pear-tree just dropping its
 petals,
 Happy as the Spring-faced wind.
 Chou-Kiou,

For whom the wild geese break their
 flight,
 And the fishes seek the darkness of the
 lower waters.
 Chou-Kiou,
 Apt as a son,
 Loved as a son,
 More precious to her father than blue
 earth with stars of silver.
 It is Chou-Kiou who paints the fighting
 crickets
 On the egg-shell cups;
 Who covers the Wa-wa cups
 With little bully boys;
 Who sketches Manchu ladies, Tartar
 ladies,
 Chasing crimson butterflies with faint
 silk fans,
 On the slim teapots of young bamboo.
 Chou-Kiou,
 Bustling all day between the kilns and
 the warehouses.
 A breath of peach-bloom silk
 Turning a pathway —
 Puff! She is gone,
 As a peach-blossom painted on paper
 Caught in a corner of the wind.

King-te-chin in the Province of Kiangsi,
 Noblest of the manufactories of porcelain,
 Where, from sunrise to sundown,
 In the narrow streets,
 The porters cry "Way! Way!" for the
 beautiful dishes

They carry to the barges,
 The flat barges which nuzzle and nudge
 the banks of the river Jao T'cheou;
 And the strong stevedore coolies grunt
 As they lift the clay bricks quarried in
 the P'ing-li mountains
 Out of the sharp-prowed boats moored
 along the river Ki-muen.

Mêng Tsung, master of a thousand work-
 men,
 Walks under the red eaves of his build-
 ings

In the tea-green shadow of the willow-
 trees,

Contemplating his bakers, his mixers, his
 painters,

The men who carry tcha wood,
 And those, nicer-fingered, who turn the
 shaping wheels.

He walks among the beehive furnaces,
 And his nostrils smart with the sharp
 scent of ashes,

And his ears rattle with the crackle of a
 hundred flames.

Mêng Tsung, finest of the porcelain-
 makers of King-te-chin.

In China,

Old China,

What other artists do is his work also;
 Does Lu Tzū Kang work in jade; the
 porcelains of Mêng Tsung are ice and
 rainbows.

What Chu Pi-shan can do in silver,

What Hsiao-hsi in carnelian,

Pao T'ien-ch'ing in rhinoceros horn,

P'u Chung-ch'ien in carved bamboo,

Chang Ch'ien-li in mother-of-pearl,

All this is nothing.

The bowls of Mêng Tsung are like Spring
 sun on a rippled river,

Like willow-leaves seen over late ice,

Like bronze bells one hour before sun-
 set.

They are light as the eggs of the yellow-
 eyebrowed thrush,

And wonderful in colour as the green
 grapes of Turkestan.

Mêng Tsung walks under the red eaves
 of his buildings,

Musing on the beauty of old, old China,
 Listening to the dull beating of the fish-
 drums in the monastery on the hill
 calling the attention of God to the
 prayers of his monks.

Beautiful the sun of China,

Beautiful the squares of flooded rice-
 fields,

The long slopes of tea plants on the hills
 of Ning-po,

The grey mulberry-trees of Chuki.

Beautiful the cities between the rivers,
 But three, and three, and three times
 more beautiful

The porcelains fashioned by Chou-Kiou.
 See them in the sun,

Swept over by the blowing shade of wil-
 lows,

Moulded like lotus-leaves,

Yellow as the skins of eels,

Black glaze overlaid with gold.

Tell the story of this porcelain
 With veins like arbor-vitae leaves and
 bullock's hair,

Mottled as hare's fur,

Bright and various as the wooded walls of
 mountains.

Here are the dawn-red wine-cups,

And the cups of snow-blue with no glis-
 ten;

Little vases, barely taller than a toad,

And great, three-part vases shining slowly
 like tarnished silver.

They stand in rows along the flat board
 And she checks them, one by one, on a

tablet of fir-flower paper,

And her eyes are little copper bells fallen
 in the midst of tall grass.

Tell the tale of these great jars,

Cloudy coloured as the crystal grape

With white bloom of rice-dust upon
 them,

Fallen over at the top by pointed bunches
 Of the myriad-year wistaria.

Those smaller jars of moonlight enamel,
 dark and pale,

With undulating lines which seem to
 change.

Pots green as growing plants are green,

Marked with the hundred-fold crackle of
 broken ice.

Pallets painted blue with dragons,

And ample dishes, redder than fresh blood,
 Spotted with crabs' claws,
 Splashed with bluish flames of fire
 Here are bowls faintly tinted as tea dust
 Or the fading leaf of the camphor tree in Autumn,
 Others as bamboo paper for thickness,
 Lightly spattered with vermilion fishes,
 And white bowls
 Surpassing hoar frost and the pointed tips of icicles
 Here are birds painted thinly in dull reds,
 Fighting cocks with rose pink legs and crests of silver,
 Leopards rough as the skin of the Kio orange, or blistered with the little flower buds of the Tsong tree
 How tell the carminates,
 The greens of pale copper,
 The leopard spotted yellows,
 The blues, powdered and indefinite as a Mei plum!
 Globular bodies with bulbous mouths,
 Slim, long porcelains confused like a weedy sea,
 Porcelains, pale as the morning sky
 Fluttered with purple wings of finches,
 High footed cups for green wine,
 And incense burners yellow as old Llama books
 With cranes upon them
 Blue porcelain for the Altar of Heaven,
 Yellow for the Altar of Earth,
 Red for the Altar of the Sun,
 White for the Altar of the Year star
 All these Chou-Kiou sets down on her fir-flower tablet,
 Then carefully, carefully, selects a cup
 Of so keen a transparency that the sun, passing it, can scarcely mark a shadow,
 And fills it with water
 Oh! The purple fishes!
 The dark coloured fishes with scales of silver!
 The blue black fishes swerving in a trail of gold!
 They move and flicker,
 They swing in procession,
 They dart, and hesitate, and float
 With flower waving tails —
 The vase is empty again,
 Smooth and open and colourless
 The tally is finished,

The sun is sinking in a rose green sky,
 And in the guard house down the road
 The red tallow candles are lighted

It is the fifth day of the fifth month,
 And all the demons of old China
 Are chattering down from the mountains of the North.
 Little Chou Kiou,
 Where are the spears of the sweet-flag
 You should have gathered yesterday
 And nailed to the door lintel at the first flow of morning?
 Little Chou Kiou,
 It is too late,
 The guards have clanged the Dragon Gate
 Flags do not grow in this trodden city,
 Demons laugh at the studded walls of men
 You dream of your betrothed
 As you roll your tablet,
 Your lover sailing the sharp seas,
 Your lover of the tall junks
 Trading up and down the coast
 Glad when the two eyes of his ship
 Are turned again to China
 Silly Chou Kiou,
 Absorbed by love and dishes,
 Forgetting the evil spirits
 Descending from the curled blue mountains

Open the Gate,
 Open the Gate,
 His Lordship T'ang Ling,
 High official to the Emperor,
 Waits without the walls
 Hurry, Guards,
 The sun is red,
 The gate already casts a shadow.
 T'ang Ling is come
 To visit the porcelain factories
 Of Kingte chin
 Click! Click! — loud and imperious!
 It is the mandarin's outrunners,
 And the rods they are carrying and striking on the ground
 Clash,
 Clash,
 Congs
 Feet of men in the clouded dust,
 Whipping banners scarlet and gold,
 Tablet bearers carrying his scrolls.

All of his titles,
 All of his greatness,
 All of his honours,
 Who were his fathers,
 Grim, dim, warriors,
 Poems and speeches.
 Pass,
 Pass,
 Golden the heels of the men of T'ang
 Ling.

Here is one staggering,
 Mightily flouting,
 The heavy, flat, superb umbrella!
 Spreading crimson as a lotus,
 Frozen sun disk,
 Carried high before him.
 Clatter! Trip! Clatter! Clatter!
 See the caparisoned horses
 Glittering and kicking —
 How lightly ride the men of T'ang Ling!
 They bear the moon fans before his face,
 Honourable gentleman.
 They raise the golden melon mace.
 They have bamboos for the contumacious,
 And chains for persons who resist the
 God-like will.

A space,
 Rifting the procession —
 Then a bright and massive thing:
 His Chair!
 Gold thunder carvings,
 Mighty lines and fallen spirals,
 Dazzling as the sun on cannon,
 And he, the Proud One, T'ang Ling,
 With his sapphire button,
 And the plaques of his coat embroidered
 with one-eyed peacocks' feathers.
 Play Ch'ang flutes before him,
 Make a loud music of cymbals,
 Pluck sharply on the three-stringed
 guitars,
 Prostrate yourselves,
 And beat the snake-skin drums.
 K'otow, Mêng Tsung,
 Walk backwards past the beehive furnaces,
 T'ang Ling, servant of the Yellow Emperor,
 Has come to inspect the porcelain.

You must stay in the Eastern Pavilion,
 Chou Kiou,
 Hiding and peeking behind the amethyst
 flowers of the peonies.

But do not forget the sweet-flag
 Which you did not hang upon the door.

Tea appears red in white Hsing-chou
 porcelain,
 How strange then to offer such to an
 official.
 When T'ang Ling came to visit Mêng
 Tsung
 They sat under a cinnamon-tree
 Examining the "Pieces of a Thousand
 Flowers."

Coiling-dragon tea is best in black cups,
 And silver vessels hold the gosling-down
 wine.

Lychees and finger citrons
 Delight the palate of the great man,
 And flat-land ginger, soft and tender to
 the taste;
 But candied melon-rind calls for more
 wine.

One hundred cups is nothing to so high
 an officer.

Already his fingers stray in vagueappings
 Among the samples of porcelain.

A dragon bowl, seven days fired, for the
 Palace.

What is T'ang Ling doing with the
 sword —

Does he dream of the campaigns of his
 youth,

Whirling it voraciously before him?

His sword is tempered to an edge of
 flame,

It cleaves the dragon bowl without a
 splinter.

Chou-Kiou,

Chou-Kiou,

Was the river so far that you could not
 reach it yesterday before the twilight
 fell?

The flags which you did not pick must
 spear your heart.

A diamond-marked python scuttles away
 under the potting-shed,

But every one knows that evil spirits take
 many forms.

.

Drive,
 Frosty sea,
 Against the high beak of this junk,
 Cover the painted eyes with foam.
 Kuan-Yin, Goddess of sailors,

Care for this man;
 Even in remembering, his betrothed has
 forgotten him.
 It will be long — long —
 Before they sit together gazing at the
 flowery candles.
 Pirate junks make bitter waiting.
 The moon above the potting-sheds is
 cold.

.
 Disaster,
 A great plague of disaster,
 Fellen upon the factory of Mêng Tsung.
 Felt spirits in clay, in water, in fire.
 The clay weakens in the potter's grasp
 And falls to powder on the wheel.
 When the furnaces are opened,
 The lovely-shaped vessels
 Are run into flakes of cream
 At the bottom of the scggars.
 The tcha wood,
 The strong, horned tcha wood,
 Crisp, brittle, dried to the very bite of
 fire,
 Hewn perfectly,
 Split to an even thickness,
 Piled with meticulous care by the circular
 pilers —
 The tcha wood dies under the touch of
 the lighters,
 It crackles as though each pore seeped
 water;
 And the men who carry it to the ovens
 Swear at the splinters buried in their
 flesh.
 Cinnabar vases bake an acrid chrome,
 Blue glaze gutters into thorns of yellow,
 Fox fingers smear the delicately etched
 designs.
 Have the P'ci-se-kong, the colour-mixers,
 gone mad?
 The pound — pound — of their pestles
 seems louder than usual.
 No — pestles do not strike with such a
 clang:
 Devil gongs beat on the roof-tiles,
 Devil bells tinkle at the windows,
 A bloody moon casts an ape's shadow
 On the open space before the warehouse
 door.
 There is a wailing of gibbons in the wil-
 low-trees,
 But gibbons do not live in the populous
 city of King-te-chin.

In twos, in threes, in companies,
 The servants of the factory slink away.
 Chou-Kiou weeps at her painting,
 For the junk with the watching eyes is
 desperately overdue.

Foxes dance by night in dim, old China,
 And the agent of the Emperor demands
 the delivery of the Palace bowls.

Mêng Tsung is a crazy man,
 He nods his head and claps his hands,
 He sits and plays a game of chess
 In a staring, stuttering idleness.
 Swallows build in the eye-holes of his
 kilns.

See her pick her way up the stony path,
 Her little feet, small as the quarters of a
 sweet orange,
 Bear her sadly over the roughness.
 The stars hang out of the sky like lotus-
 seeds,
 It is the third watch, and the city gates
 are shut.
 Taoist priests know many things,
 And folk bewitched say nothing of diffi-
 culties.

The whine of an owl trembles along the
 darkness.
 She runs,
 Flinging her heart forward,
 Reaching to it,
 Floundering.

"We need light," says the Taoist priest,
 And he cuts a bit of paper round like the
 moon
 And hangs it on the wall.
 And it is the moon,
 Smoothly shining,
 Silver and lesser silver,
 Hanging from a pin.
 He steps into the moon to think,
 And she sees him drinking rice-wine
 And slowly writing on a tablet.
 The room is filled with the larkspur scent
 of ink.

The priest steps down from the paper
 moon.
 He reads from a scroll,
 Droning the words,
 Teetering back and forth on
 feet:

"The protection of the sweet-flag has been dishonourably neglected.

Chou-Kiou, accused woman, following the toys of this present life, has hardened her mind to the teaching of the ages,

She, daughter of Mêng Tsung greatest of those who work in porcelain,

Has strayed from the path of her most respected ancestors.

Thinking of love, she forgot filial piety; Sured by beauty, she permitted her august father's house to go unguarded. Now a fox has entered the body of her most directly-to-be-commiserated father,

While he by whom she was truly begot lies bound in the cave of the Tiger-peaked mountain.

Weary, weary, the way of an arrogant heart,

Sad, and beyond sadness, the lot of Chou-Kiou.

With her white hands she must labour, With her 'golden lily' feet she must stumble under terrific burdens.

The breath of her mouth must coax the flame to enter wet wood,

She must sear and burn before the hot furnaces,

And, waking many nights and days, produce in agony a bowl

'Bright as a mirror, blue as the sky, thin as paper, sweet-sounding to the touch as camphor-jade.'

China!

China!

The voice of Chou-Kiou is very small,

Her eyes are pale,

Her limbs stiff as frozen thorns:

"And if I do this thing,

What of him, Wu, my betrothed?"

"The scroll is written," said the Taoist priest.

The Gods are many and confused in old, dim China.

Morning leaping from the rims of the mountains;

Darkness leaning farther and farther over a descending sun.

Clouds bring rain,

And winds dry the pools of it.

The North-west wind whirls dust over the willow-trees;

Wild duck and teal cross and re-cross King-te-chin

In search of water,

And the hurry of their wings

Is the rush of the Northern monsoon

Sweeping the gulf of Tonkin.

Chou-Kiou pounds the blue clay,

Kneading it with effort to its finest granules.

Days and Days —

The smartweed reddens on the river shoals;

Eye-fruit and pears are dropping in the gardens;

Floating elm-leaves gild running water;

The pinnacles of the Dragon Mountains are clear above red mist.

Chou-Kiou paints a crane and two mandarin ducks

Under a persimmon-tree.

She dips the jar, and poises it,

But her ears are numb with the heavy sound of the sea.

Cold winds.

Long Autumn.

"Leaves touched by frost are redder than flowers of the second moon."

How drag the great wood,

How build it into a circle of fire,

Waveringly uncertain on the "golden lily" feet?

Shêng! Shêng! The water-clock marks an hour which has gone.

The wind is sad, blowing ceaselessly from the clear stars,

The lamp-flower flickers and dies down.

Is her shadow some one?

Is she, perhaps, not alone?

She raises the bamboo blind,

Snow is falling,

The branches of the Winter plum-tree

Glitter like jade hairpins against a white sky.

Brooms brush little snow,

Her fox father laughs and rattles his chess-men.

Chou-Kiou,

Bones under frosty water

Bleach as white as the jade-coloured
branches of the plum-tree:

You remember now,
Sweeping from dawn till evening
A pathway to the kilns.

She has blown upon the fire and kindled
it,

She has set her fragile bowl in the midst
of the flame.

She lifts her eyes from the red fire
For green Spring is like smoke in the
willow-trees.

The rivers run flooding over the wharves
of King-te-chin.

She hears the porters shouting: "Way!
Way!"

In the streets, going up and down from
the boats.

But about her is only the harsh sound of
fire,

And a crow calling: "Ka! Ka! Ka!"
In a mulberry-tree.

Ashes of fire,
Ashes of the days of the World!
If failure, then another long beginning.
Why hope,
Why think that Spring must bring relent-
ing.

O man of this woman,
Where on all the Spring-flown oceans
Is your junk?

Where your heart that you cannot hear
the cuckoos calling from the fir woods
of the Golden Yoke Cliff?

China blossoms above her sea-beaches,
Her trees break budding to an early sun,
Foot-boats fly along the blue rivers,
But Chou-Kiou sobs as brick by brick she
opens the cooled kiln.

Oh, marvel of lightness!
Oh, colour hidden and all at once em-
phatically clear!

Like a bright moon carved in ice,
Green as the thousand peaks,
Blue as the sky after rain,
Violet as the skin of an egg-plant fruit,
Then once again white,
White as the "secretly-smiling" magnolia,
And singing a note when struck
Sharp and full as all the hundred and
fifty bells

On the Porcelain Tower of Nankin.

This bowl is worth one hundred taels of
silver.

Pour in the black dragon tea,
Plucked in April before the Spring rains,
This shall be a libation to Kuan-Yin,
Goddess of Mercy.

Chou-Kiou has no wine.

Fragrant Goddess, despise not the yellow
tea.

But the tea bubbles,

It moves like waves in a short bay,
It tumbles with a glitter of rainbows.

Wing-flare widening out of the cup —

The great crane sweeps into the air.

He circles round Chou-Kiou,

Circles, circles —

With him are the mandarin ducks.

The air is dark with wings,

It is bright with the clipping and cut-
ting

Of quickly-flickered wings.

In a whirl of wind,

Something comes twirling and dazzling
out of the house,

Flapping in plum-coloured silks,

Confusing with motion,

Blurred,

Without contour.

It is a man —

It is a bit of paper —

It is a bamboo-silk cocoon —

It blows, turning — turning — toward the
bowl,

It is blown into the bowl —

The tea is red,

It leaps, water-spouting, into the air.

It soars over the red roof-tiles,

It glitters like a pagoda hot with
lamps,

And then descends,

Sucking, into the bowl,

Sucking, out of the bowl,

Disappearing where there is no hole.

It is a beautiful piece,

With white and grey peonies and yellow
persimmons.

There are no birds, only flowers,
Starting in a chord of colours out of
violet haze.

Chou-Kiou has fainted,

She does not hear Mêng Tsung

Calling to her from the Terrace of the
Peach-Trees.

'The protection of the sweet flag has
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Calling to her from the Terrace of the
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I read this tale in the "Azure Sky Book-shop," in the ninth month of the sixth year of T'ò Kwong.

When I had reached this point, the shadows of a thirty-two-paper kite fell upon my page, and raising my eyes to the sky, the whiteness of the sun dazzled me, and I inadvertently turned over the leaves of the book.

How many I turned, I do not know, but when I could see again after the blindness of the sky I read at once, not daring to go back for the leap of the story upon which I had fallen—

"Pity, pity me,
For my flesh cries night and morning;
The darkness heats me.
And the tongues of the darkness babble
back his name.

I am eager and thwarted.
Daughter I am,
And as a daughter I have given my brain
and my body
To restore my father's house.

Alone, with bleeding feet and frozen
hands,
I have lifted the curse fallen upon my
people;

I have toiled without sleep
Until the sight of my eyes was broken.
Hungering for days, chattering with cold
and sorrow,
I have not suffered my heart to weaken.

My prayers have risen incessantly to the
thirty-three Heavens.

All powerful Goddess, you have regarded
me,

And taken me under your protection.

I am a worm,
Spinning the mulberry-leaf to cry upon
the moon.

Holy Kuan-Yin, of the thousand eyes, and
the thousand arms, and the merciful
heart,

I beseech a farther clemency.
You, who answer the longings of the
sterile,

Do not mock me with a half-completed
pardon.

Daughter I am, Kuan-Yin,
But I am also a woman.
I love as women here in China must not,
But as you know very well they must and
do.

Glory has once more entered into my
father's heart,

All day he watches his men.

He weighs the precious blue earth and
numbers it.

He oversees the lame men who knead the
clay,

He praises and chides the painters,
And rises in the night to superintend the
firsers.

King-te-chin hums like a hive at swarm-
ing time

Between its rivers,
And this is the loudest of all the factories
of King-te-chin.

Only I am desolate.

I am as the shadow of a bamboo upon
bleached sand,

My eyes are black and colourless seeking
the boats on the long canals,

My ears rattle waiting for the sharp sound
of a voice at the gate.

Once more I will work, Kuan-Yin,
I will use all my skill to honour you.

I will fashion you in such a manner that
your eyes will laugh to see it.

I will make a figure of you in fine silk
porcelain

And set it in the temple where all can see,
And, looking, their hearts will be to you
as coral beads on a string of white gold

For your hand's stretching,
And for an ornament upon your breast
forever."

Then Chou-Kiou tightened her willow-
coloured girdle

And sat down to the modelling board.

And on the fifteenth day the figure was
completed,

Not entirely to Chou-Kiou's dissatisfac-
tion.

Underneath it she wrote: "Made at the
Brilliant Colours Hall."

And again: "Reverentially made by Chou-
Kiou, daughter of Mêng Tsung

Captain of the Banner promoted four
honorary grades, also Director of a

Porcelain Manufactory at King-te-chin
in the Province of Kiangsi: and

presented by her to the Temple of the
Holy God of Heaven to remain

through everlasting time as an offering
of a grateful heart and as a glory in

the eyes of men: on a fortunate day

in the Spring of the 6th year of the reign of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung."

For days she paints it,
 Rubbing the gold with garlic-bulbs
 To fix its lustre.
 Laying copper-foil about it to heighten
 the colour,
 Setting it with careful blue:
 The blue of little stones,
 The blue of the precious stone Mei-
 Kouci-tse-yeou,
 The blue of the head of Buddha.
 She dreams of beauty,
 And the face of the figure is lovely as
 her dreams;
 But has it not been written: "It is useless
 to cast a net to catch the image of the
 moon."

Night over China,
 Night over old, distant China,
 Dark night over the city of King-te-chin.
 Chou-Kiou,
 Chou-Kiou,
 Your eyes are red watching the flames of
 a furnace,
 And the great shield of wood you hold
 Scarcely protects you from the bursting
 heat of the kiln.
 For three days and three nights
 You have tended a flowing fire;
 For two days and two nights
 You have watched before a fierce fire;
 Now the seggar is red and passing into a
 white heat,
 It is bright in front and behind.
 At cock-crow you will stop the fire,
 But to-night you watch,
 And your eyes are salt
 As though you stood before the sea.
 A wind teases the willow-trees,
 They rustle,
 And fling the moonlight from them like
 spray.

And then snow fell from the midst of
 the moon.
 The flakes were like willow-flowers,
 They drifted down slowly,
 And the brilliance of the moon struck
 upon them as they fell
 So that all the air was flowing with silver,
 And walking in the arc of it was a woman

Who cast a whip-like shadow before her
 From the brightness of the snow and the
 white, round moon.

All the flowers bend toward her,
 The grass by the ring-fence lies horizon-
 tally to reach her,
 She moves with the movement of wind
 over water,
 And it is no longer the moon which casts
 her shadow
 But she who sets shadows curving out-
 ward
 From the pebbles at her feet.
 Her dress is Ch'ing-green playing into
 scarlet,
 Embroidered with the hundred shous;
 The hem is a slow delight of gold, the
 faded, beautiful gold of temple carv-
 ings;
 In her hair is a lotus,
 Red as the sun after rain.
 She comes softly — softly —
 And the tinkle of her ornaments
 Jars the smooth falling of the snow
 So that it breaks into jagged lightnings
 Which form about her the characters of
 her holy name:
 Kuan-Yin, Goddess of Mercy, of Sailors,
 of all who know sorrow and grieve in
 bitterness.

Ochre-red sails are dark in moonlight,
 But the red heart of man is like a water-
 clock dripping the hours;
 Lost days weigh many ounces of silver,
 But green Spring is worth blood and gold.

Snow ceases falling,
 Moonlight is no longer broken, but a
 single piece.
 Her eyebrows are fine as the edge of dis-
 tant mountains,
 Her eyes are clear as the T'ung-T'ing lake
 in Autumn,
 Her face is sweet as almond-flowers in a
 wind.
 The breath of her passing is cool;
 Her gesture is a plum-blossom waving.
 She mounts the step
 And looks into the eye-hole of the kiln.
 One — two — three, the pulse of Chou-
 Kiou,
 Beating to a given time, like music.
 The coals of the fire are not fierce now

But gentle,
They lie in the form of roses
And the scent of them is the urgent scent
of musk.

A watchman calls the hour
And strikes on his bamboo drum.
The moon fades down a long green sky.
There is no one on the step,
No flight of silks down the pathway,
Chou-Kiou sickens to a weariness which
eats her bones.
She rakes the scattered embers.
The thing is done.

Spring day.
How sharp the pheasants' cry,
Like metal!
This year the bamboo flowers,
This year the many-petalled peonies
Are large as rising moons.
The men of the "Brilliant Coloured Fac-
tory" stand
In their blue jackets,
In their dark-purple silk jackets,
In a curve like the bow moon,
Watching Chou-Kiou advancing to the
furnace.
And Méng Tsung stands,
Fearfully watching.
No one must touch,
No one must caution,
No one must pray.
It is between Chou-Kiou and the Gods.
How do her ancestors in the thirty-three
Heavens?
Do they watch?
Do they listen?
Do they desire and remain silent?
Ten times round her hands
The cloth is wrapped.
Yet will they be blistered —
But it is cool!
Cold!
And the seegar falls apart without a
touch.

Fragrant Goddess,
Whose heart is of snow and rubies,
Is this the figure made by Chou-Kiou?
Not so, certainly.
Shimmer,
Lovelier,
More quaintly golden.
This face is clouds and flowers,

These eyes are wind and flame,
This body is jade and silver.
Her dress is the smoky green of Autumn
lakes
Flashed and tinted to immediate scarlet,
It is embroidered with the hundred shous,
Poised is this figure,
Balanced like a music
Of flageolets and harps under the Dawn.
Men cover their faces,
Here is a beauty to turn the dart of
arrows.
But Chou-Kiou's figure was single,
This is triplicate.
Attendants guard the dazzling Goddess,
One (who dares to see it!) Chou-Kiou,
In her peach-bloom dress with the whi-
low-coloured girdle,
And clasped and cherished in her hands
The sacred peach.
The other is a man,
Blue-dressed as in running waves,
Bronze and crimson with the rake of the
sea.
The gate-keepers shout his name,
Swift are his steps,
Like songs for gladness
His footsteps,
He is a straight shaft of sapphire,
He is a peacock feather borne upon a
spear.
He and she before the Goddess,
Heads in the dust.
Not alone do the bamboos flower;
Here are blossoms and fruit.
Kuan-Yin, Goddess of Mercy, of Sailors,
of Sterile Women,
For what they pray let them have full
answer:
Guide them as with a torch,
Scatter snow and heat like the cool of the
moon,
Defend them against enemies as a moat
or a city,
Save them in danger as a father or
mother,
Quicken them as rain and sun,
Bless the seed of this man as corn under
a rich sun,
Bless the womb of this woman as fishes
are blessed by the sea.

Then the multitude rose up
And proclaimed them mighty.
They placed her in the scarlet palanquin

And brought her before him
 They lit the flower candles,
 With punted lanterns in broad daylight
 they lined the roads
 Drums and musicians played forever,
 And fireworks blazed in the heart of the
 sky
 So the day fell
 And the night came,
 And the lizard skin drums struck mid
 night,
 And the marriage was accomplished

Sweetly the moon slept in the willow-
 trees,
 And the man and the woman slept under
 the green eyelids of the Dawn

When I finished the book, night had
 come
 I could not part with it, so I bought it
 for two ounces of silver
 Did I overprize it, do you think?
 It is only a tale of old, dead China

MANY SWANS

SUN MYTH OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

When the Goose Moon rose and
 walked upon a pale sky, and water made
 a noise once more beneath the ice on the
 river, his heart was sick with longing for
 the great good of the sun. One Winter
 again had passed, one Winter like the
 last. A long sea with waves biting each
 other under grey clouds, a shroud of
 snow from ocean to forest, snow mum-
 bling stones of bones and driftwood be-
 yond his red fire. He desired space, light,
 he cried to himself about himself, he
 made songs of sorrow and wept in the
 corner of his house. He gave his children
 toys to keep them away from him. His
 eyes were dim following the thin sun. He
 said to his wife "I want that sun. Some
 day I shall go to see it." And she said
 "Peace, be still. You will wake the chil-
 dren."

So he waited, and the Whirlwind
 Moon came, a crescent—mounted, and
 marched down beyond the morning, and
 was gone. Then the Extreme Cold Moon
 came and shone, it mounted, moved
 night by night into morning and faded
 through day to darkness. He watched
 the Old Moon pass, he saw the Eagle
 Moon come and go. Slowly the moons
 wound across the snow, and many nights
 he could not see them, he could only hear
 the waves raving foam and fury until
 dawn.

Now the Goose Moon told him things,
 but his blood lay sluggish within him

until the moon stood full and apart in
 the sky. His wife asked why he was silent.
 "I have wept my eyes dry," he answered.
 "Give me my cedar bow and my two
 winged arrows with the copper points. I
 will go into the forest and kill a moose,
 and bring fresh meat for the children."

All day he stalked the forest. He saw
 the marks of bears' claws on the trees.
 He saw the wide tracks of a lynx, and the
 little slot slot of a jumping rabbit, but
 nothing came along. Then he made a
 melancholy song for himself. "My name
 is Many Swans, but I have seen neither
 sparrow nor rabbit, neither duck nor
 crane. I will go home and sit by the fire
 like a woman and spin cedar bark for fish-
 lines."

Then silver rain ran upon him through
 the branches from the moon, and he
 stepped upon open grass and laughed at
 the touch of it under his foot. "I will
 shoot the moon," he thought, "and cut
 it into cakes for the children."

He laid an arrow on his bow and shot,
 and the copper tip made it shine like a
 star flying. He watched to see it fall, but
 it did not. He shot again, and his arrow
 was a bright star until he lost it in the
 brilliance of the moon. Soon he had shot
 all his arrows, and he stood gaping up at
 the moonshine wishing he had not lost
 them.

Then Many Swans laughed again be-
 cause his feet touched grass, not snow.
 And he gathered twigs and stuck them
 in his hair, and saw his shadow like a

tree walking there. But something tapped the twigs, he stood tangled in something. With his hand he felt it, it was the feather head of an arrow. It dangled from the sky, and the copper tip jangled upon wood and twinkled brightly. This—that—and other twinkles, pricking against the soft flow of the moon, and the wind crooned in the arrowfeathers and tinkled the bushes in his hair.

Many Swans laid his hand on the arrow and began to climb—up—up—a long time. The earth lay beneath him wide and blue, he climbed through white moonlight and purple air until he fell asleep from weariness.

Sunlight struck sidewise on a chain of arrows; below were cold clouds; above, a sky blooming like an open flower and he aiming to the heart of it. Many Swans saw that up was far, and down was also far, but he cried to himself that he had begun his journey to the sun. Then he pulled a bush from his hair, and the twigs had leaved and fruited, and there were salmon-berries dancing beneath the leaves. "My father, the sun, is good," said Many Swans, and he eat the berries and went on climbing the arrows into the heart of the sky.

He climbed till the sun set and the moon rose, and at midmost moon he fell asleep to the sweeping of the arrow-ladder like a cradle in the wind.

When dawn struck gold across the ladder, he awoke. "It is Summer," said Many Swans, "I cannot go back, it must be more days down than I have travelled. I should be ashamed to see my children, for I have no meat for them." Then he remembered the bushes, and pulled another from his hair, and there were blue huckleberries shining like polished wood in the midst of leaves. "The sun weaves the seasons," thought Many Swans, "I have been under and over the warp of the world, now I am above the world," and he went on climbing into the white heart of the sky.

Another night and day he climbed, and he eat red huckleberries from his last bush, and went on—up and up—his feet scratching on the ladder with a great noise because of the hush all round him.

When he reached an edge, he stepped over it carefully, for edges are thin and he did not wish to fall. He found a tall pine-tree by a pond. "Beyond can wait," reasoned Many Swans, "this is surely a far country." And he lay down to sleep under the pine-tree, and it was the fourth sleep he had had since he went hunting moose to bring meat to his family.

The shadow crept away from him, and the sun came and sat upon his eyelids, so that by and by he opened them and rubbed his eyes because a woman stared at him, and she was beautiful as a salmon leaping in Spring. Her skirt was woven of red and white cedar bark, she had carved silver bracelets and copper bracelets set with haliotis shell, and ear-rings of sharks' teeth. She sparkled like a river salmon, and her smile was water tipping to a light South breeze. She pleased the heart of Many Swans so that fear was not in him, only longing to take her for himself as a man does a woman, and he asked her name. "Grass-Bush-and-Blossom is my name," she answered. "I am come after you. My grandmother has sent me to bring you to her house." "And who is your grandmother?" asked Many Swans. But the girl shook her head, and took a pinch of earth from the ground and threw it toward the sun. "She has many names. The grass knows her, and the trees, and the fishes in the sea. I call her 'grandmother,' but they speak of her as 'The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky.'" Many Swans marvelled and said nothing, for things are different in a far country.

They walked together, and the man hungered for the woman and could not wait. But she said no word, and he eat up her beauty as though it were a ripe foam-berry and still went fasting until his knees trembled, and his heart was like hot dust, and his hands ached to thrust upon her and turn her toward him. So they went, and Many Swans forgot his wife and children and the earth hanging below the sharp edge of the sky.

The South wind sat on a rock and never ceased to blow, locking the

branches of the trees together; a flock of swans rose out of the South-East, one and seven, making strange, changing lines across a smooth sky. Wild flax-blossoms ran blue over the bases of black and red totem poles. The colours were strong as blood and death, they rattled like painted drums against the eyesight. "Many Swans!" said the girl and smiled. "Blood and death," drummed the totem poles. "Alas!" nodded the flax. The man heeded nothing but the woman and the soles of his feet beating on new ground.

The houses were carved with the figures of the Spring Salmon. They were carved in the form of a rainbow. Hooked noses stood out above doorways, crooked wooden men crouched, frog-shaped, gazing under low caves. It was a beautiful town, ringing with colours, singing brightly, terribly, in the smooth light. All the way was sombre and gay, and the man walked and said nothing.

They came to a house painted black and carved with stars. In the centre was a round moon with a door in it. So they entered and sat beside the fire, and the woman gave the man fish-roe and gooseberries, but his desire burnt him and he could not eat.

Grass-Bush-and-Blossom saw his trouble, and she led him to a corner, and showed him many things. There were willow arrows and quivers for them. There were mountain-goat blankets and painted blankets of two elk-skins, there were buffalo-skins, and dressed buckskins, and deerskins with young, soft hair. But Many Swans cared for nothing but the swing of the woman's bark skirt, and the sting of her loveliness which gave him no peace.

Grass-Bush-and-Blossom led him to another corner, and showed him crest helmets, and wooden armour; she showed him coppers like red rhododendron blooms, and plumes of eagles' wings. She gave him clubs of whalebone to handle, and cedar trumpets which blow a sound cool and sweet as the noise of bees. But Many Swans found no ease in looking save at her arms between the bracelets, and his trouble grew and pressed upon him until he felt strangled.

She led him farther and showed him a

canoe painted silver and vermilion with white figures of fish upon it, and the gun-wales fore and aft were set with the teeth of the sea-otter. She lifted out the paddles, the blades were shaped like hearts and striped with fire hues. She said, "Choose. These are mine and my grandmother's. Take what you will." But Many Swans was filled with the glory of her standing as a young tree about to blossom, and he took her and felt her sway and fold about him with the tightness of new leaves. "This" — said Many Swans, "this — for am I not a man!" So they abode and the day ran gently past them, slipping as river water, and evening came, and someone entered, darkening the door.

Then Grass-Bush-and-Blossom wrapped her cedar-bark skirt about her and sprang up, and her silver and copper ornaments rang sweetly with her moving. The One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky looked at Many Swans. "You have not waited," she said. "Alas! It is an evil beginning. My son, my son, I wished to love you." But he was glad and thought: "It is a querulous old woman, I shall heed her no more than the crackling of a fire of frost-bitten twigs."

The old woman went behind the door and hung up something. It pleased him. It was shining. When he woke in the night, he saw it in the glow of the fire. He liked it, and he liked the skins he lay on and the woman who lay with him. He thought only of these things.

In the morning, the old woman unhooked the shining object and went out, and he turned about to his wife and said sharp, glad words to her and she to him, and the sun shone into the house until evening, and in the night again he was happy, because of the thing that glittered and flashed and moved to and fro, clashing softly on the wall.

The days were many. He did not count them. Every morning the old woman took out the shining thing, and every evening she brought it home, and all night it shone and cried "Ching-a-ling" as it dangled against the wall.

Moons and moons went by, no doubt. Many Swans did not reckon them out.

Was there an earth? Was there a sky?
He remembered nothing. He did not
try. And then one day, wandering along
the street of carved houses, he heard a
song. He heard the beat of rattles and
drums, and the shrill humming of
trumpets blown to a broken rhythm:

"Hiaiōō! Hiaiōō!

Many salmon are coming ashore,
They are coming ashore to you, the
post of our heaven,
They are dancing from the salmon's
country to the shore.

I come to dance before you at the
right-hand side of the world, over-
towering, outshining, surpassing
all: I, the Salmon!
Hiaiōō! Hiaiōō!"

And the drums rumbled like the first
thunder of a year, and the rattles pat-
tered like rain on flower petals, and the
trumpets hummed as wind hums in
round-leaved trees; and people ran, jump-
ing, out of the Spring Salmon house and
leapt to the edge of the sky and disap-
peared, falling quickly, calling the song
to one another as they fell so that the
sound of it continued rising up for a long
time.

Many Swans listened, and he recol-
lected that when the Spring salmon jump,
the children say: "Ayun! Do it again!"
He thought of his children and his wife
whom he had left on the earth, and won-
dered who had brought them meat, who
had caught fish for them, and he was sad
at his thoughts and wept, saying: "I want
to shoot birds for my children. I want
to spear trout for my children." So he
went back to his house, and his feet
dragged behind him like nets drawn
across sand.

He lay down upon his bed and grieved,
because he had no children in the sky,
and because the wife of his youth was
lost to him. He would not eat, but lay
with his head covered and made no
sound.

Then Grass-Bush-and-Blossom asked
him: "Why do you grieve?" But he was
silent. And again she said: "Why do you
grieve?" But he answered nothing. And
she asked him many times, until at last

he told her of his children, of his other
wife whom he had left, and she was pit-
iful because she loved him.

When the old woman came, she also
said: "What ails your husband that he
lies there saying nothing?" And Grass-
Bush-and-Blossom answered: "He is
homesick. We must let him depart."

Many Swans heard what she said, and
he got up and made himself ready. Now
the old woman looked sadly at him. "My
son," she said, "I told you it was a bad
beginning. But I wish to love you. Choose
among these things what you will have,
and return to your people."

Many Swans pointed to the shining
thing behind the door and said: "I will
have that." But the old woman would
not give it to him. She offered him
spears of bone, and yew bows, and ar-
rows winged with ducks' feathers. But
he would not have them. She offered
him strings of blue and white shells, and
a copper canoe with a sternboard of
copper and a copper bailer. He would
not take them. He wanted the thing that
glittered and cried "Ching-a-ling" as it
dangled against the wall. She offered him
all that was in the house. But he liked
that great thing that was shining there.
When that thing turned round it was
shining so that one had to close one's
eyes. He said: "That only will I have."
Then she gave it to him, saying: "You
wanted it. I wished to love you, and I do
love you." She hung it on him. "Now
go home."

Many Swans ran swiftly, he ran to the
edge of the sky, there he found the ladder
of the rainbow. He put his foot on it
and went down, and he felt strong and
able to do anything. He forgot the sky
and thought only of the earth.

Many Swans made a song as he went
down the rainbow ladder. He sang with
a loud voice:

"I will go and tear to pieces Mount
Stevens, I will use it for stones for
my fire.

I will go and break Mount Qa'tsta'is,
I will use it for stones for my fire."

All day and all night he went down,
and he was so strong he did not need to

sleep. The next day he made a new song. He shouted it with a great noise:

"I am going all round the world,
I am at the centre of the world,
I am the post of the world,
On account of what I am carrying
in my hand."

This pleased him, and he sang it all day and was not tired at all.

Four nights and days he was going down the ladder, and every day he made a song, and the last was the best. This was it:

"Oh wonder! He is making a turmoil on the earth.
Oh wonder! He makes the noise of falling objects on the earth.
Oh wonder! He makes the noise of breaking objects on the earth."

He did not really mean this, but it was a good song. That is the way with people who think themselves clever. Many Swans sang this song a great many times and on the fourth day, when the dawn was red, he touched the earth and walked off upon it.

When Many Swans arrived on the earth, he was not very near his village. He stood beneath a sea-cliff, and the rocks of the cliff were sprinkled with scarlet moss as it might have been a fall of red snow, and lilac moss smouldered between boulders of pink granite. Far out, the sea sparkled all colours like an abalone shell, and red fish sprang from it—one and another, over its surface. As he gazed, a shadow slipped upon the water, and, looking up, he saw a raven flying and overturning as it flew. Red fish, black raven—blood and death—but Many Swans called "Haihōh-hōi!" and danced a long time on the sea-sand because he felt happy in his heart.

He heard a robin singing, and as it sang he walked along the shore and counted his fingers for the headlands he must pass to reach home. He saw the canoes come out to fish, he said the names of his friends who should be in them. He thought of his house and the

hearth strewn with white shells and sand. When the canoes of twelve rowers passed, he tried to signal them, but they went by too far from land. The way seemed short, for all day he told himself stories of what people would say to him. "I shall be famous, my fame will reach to the ends of the world. People will try to imitate me. Every one will desire to possess my power." So Many Swans said foolish things to himself, and the day seemed short until the evening when he came in sight of his village.

At the dusky time of night, he came to it, and he heard singing, so he knew his people were having a festival. He could hear the dance-sticks clattering on the cedar boards and the moon-rattles whirling, and he could see the smoke curling out of the smoke-holes. Then he shouted very much and ran fast; but, as he ran, the thing which he carried in his hands shook and cried: "We shall strike your town." Then Many Swans went mad; he turned, swirling like a great cloud, he rose as a pillar of smoke and bent in the wind as smoke bends, he streamed as bands of black smoke, and out of him darted flames, red-mouthed flames, so that they scorched his hair. His hands were full of blood, and he yelled "Break! Break! Break! Break!" and did not know whose voice it was shouting.

There was a tree, and a branch standing out from it, and fire came down and hung on the end of the branch. He thought it was copper which swung on the tree, because it twirled and had a hard edge. Then it split as though a wedge had riven it, and burst into purple flame. The tree was consumed, and the fire leapt laughing upon the houses and poured down through the roofs upon the people. The flame-mouths stuck themselves to the houses and sucked the life from all the people, the flames swallowed themselves and brought forth little flames which ran a thousand ways like young serpents just out of their eggs, till the fire girdled the village and the water in front curdled and burned like oil.

Then Many Swans knew what he had done, and he tried to throw away his

power which was killing everybody. But he could not do it. The people lay there dead, and his wife and children among the dead people. His heart was sick, and he cried: "The weapon flew into my hands with which I am murdering," and he tried to throw it away, but it stuck to his flesh. He tried to cut it apart with his knife, but the blade turned and blunted. He cried bitterly: "Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!" and tried to break what he wore on a stone, but it did not break. Then he cut off his hair and blackened his face, and turned inland to the spaces of the forest, for his heart was dead with his people. And the moon followed him over the tops of the trees, but he hated the moon because it reminded him of the sky.

A long time Many Swans wandered in the forest. White-headed eagles flew over the trees and called down to him: "There is the man who killed everybody." By night the owls hooted to each other: "The man who sleeps has blood on him, his mouth is full of blood, he let loose his power on his own people." Many Swans beat upon his breast and pleaded with the owls: "You with ears far apart who hear everything, you the owls, it was not I who killed, but this evil thing I carry and which I cannot put down." But the owls laughed, shrill, mournful, broken laughs, repeating the words they had said, so that Many Swans could not sleep and in the morning he was so weak he shook when he walked.

He walked among pines which flowed before him in straight, opening lines like water, and the wind in the pine-branches warned his soul as he heard it all day long. At first he ate nothing, but when he stumbled and fell for faintness he gathered currants and partridge-berries and so made his feet carry him on.

He came to a wood of red firs where fire had been before him. The heartwood of the firs was all burnt out, but the trees stood on stumps of sapwood and mocked the man who slew with fire.

He passed through woods of spear-leaf trees, with sharp vines head-high all about them. He thrust the thing he carried into the vines and tried to let go of it,

but it would not stay tangled and came away in his hand.

He heard the slap of beavers' tails on water, and saw muskrats building cabins with the stalks of wild rice in shoal water, but they scattered as he came near. The little animals fled before him in fear, chattering to each other. Even the bears deserted the huckleberry bushes when they heard the fall of his foot, so that he walked alone. Above him, the waxwings were catching flies in the spruce-tops, they were happy because it was Summer and warm, they were the only creatures too busy to look down at the man who moved on as one who never stops, making his feet go always because there was nothing else to do.

By and by the trees thinned, and Many Swans saw beyond them to a country of tall grass. He rested here some time eating fox-grapes and blackberries, for indeed he was almost famished, and weary with the sickness of solitude. He thought of the ways of men, and hungered after speech and comforting. But he saw no man, and the prairie frightened him, rolling endlessly to the sky.

At last his blood quickened again, and the longing for people beat a hard pulse in his throat so that he rose and went on, seeking where he might find men. For days he sought, following the trails of wild horses and buffalo, tripping among the crawling pea-vines, bruised and baffled, blind with the sharp shimmer of the grass.

Then suddenly they came, riding out of the distance on both sides of him. These men wore eagle-plume bonnets, and their horses went so fast he could not see their legs. They ran glittering toward one another, whooping and screaming, and the horses' tails streamed out behind them stiffly like bunches of bones. Each man lay prone on his horse and shot arrows, hawk-feathered arrows, owl-feathered arrows, and they were terrible in swiftness because the feathers had not been cut or burned to make them low.

The arrows flew across one another like a swarm of grasshoppers leaping, and the men foamed forward as waves foam at a double tide.

They came near, bright men, fine as whips, striding lithe cat horses. One rode a spotted horse, and on his head was an upright plume of the tail-feathers of the black eagle. One rode a buckskin horse, long-winded and chary as a panther. One rode a sorrel horse painted with zigzag lightnings. One rode a clay-coloured horse, and the figure of a kingfisher was stamped in blue on its shoulder. Wild-cat running horses, and their hoofs rang like thunder-drums on the ground, and the men yelled with brass voices:

"We who live are coming.
Ai-ya-ya-yai!
We are coming to kill.
Ai-ya-ya-yai!
We are coming with the snake
arrows,
We are coming with the tomahawks
Which swallow their faces.
Ai-ya-ya-yai!
We will hack our enemies.
Ai-ya-ya-yai!
We will take many scalps.
Ai-ya-ya-yai!
We will kill — kill — till every one
is dead.
Ai-ya-ya-ya-yai!"

Many Swans lay in a buffalo wallow and hid, and a white fog slid down from the North and covered the prairie. For a little time he heard the war-whoops and the pit-pit of hitting arrows, and then he heard nothing, and he lay beneath the cold fog hurting his ears with listening. When the sky was red in the evening and the fog was lifted, he shifted himself and looked above the grass. "Alas! Alas!" wept Many Swans, "the teeth of their arrows were like dogs' teeth. They have devoured their enemies." For nobody was there, but the arrows were sticking up straight in the ground. Then Many Swans went a long way round that place for he thought that the stomachs of the arrows must be full of blood. And so he went on alone over the prairie, and his heart was black with what he had seen.

A stream flowed in a sunwise turn across the prairie, and the name of the stream was "Burnt Water," because it tasted

dark like smoke. The prairie ran out tongues of raw colours — blue of camass, red of geranium, yellow of parsley — at the young green grass. The prairie flung up its larks on a string of sunshine, it lay like a catching-sheet beneath the black breasts balancing down on a wind, calling "See it! See it! See it!" in little round voices.

Antelope and buffalo,
Threading the tall green grass they
go,
To and fro, to and fro.
And painted Indians ride in a row,
With arrow and bow, arrow and
bow,
Hunting the antelope, the buffalo.
Truly they made a gallant show
Across the prairie's bright green flow,
Warriors painted indigo,
Brown antelope, black buffalo,
Long ago.

Now when he heard the barking of dogs, and saw the bundles of the dead lashed to the cottonwood-trees, Many Swans knew that he was near a village. He stood still, for he dared not go on because of the thing which he had with him. He said to himself, "My mind is not strong enough to manage it. My mind is afraid of it." But he longed to speak with men, and so he crept a little nearer until he could see the painted tepees standing in the edge of the sunshine, and smell the smoke of dried sweet grass. Many Swans heard the tinkling of small bells from the buffalo tails hung on the tepees, he saw the lodge ears move gently in the breeze. He heard talk, the voices of men, and he cried aloud and wept, holding his hands out toward the village.

Then the thing which he was carrying shook, and said: "We shall strike that town." Many Swans heard it, and he tried to keep quiet. He tried to throw the thing down, but his hands closed. He could not keep his mind, and his senses flew away so that he was crazy. He heard a great voice shouting: "Break! Break! Break! Break!" but he did not know that it was his own voice.

Back over the prairie sprang up a round cloud, and fire rose out of the heart of the grass. The reds and yellows of the flowers exploded into flame, showers of sparks rattled on the metal sky, which turned purple and huddled itself down upon the earth. Winds changed the fire, lashing it with long thongs of green lightning, herding the flames over the high grass; and the fire screamed and danced and blew blood whistles, and the scarlet feet of the fire clinked a tune of ghost bells on the shells of the dry cane brakes. Animals ran — ran — ran — and were overtaken, shaken grass glittered up with a roar and spilled its birds like burnt paper into the red air. The eagle's wing melted where it flew, the hills of the prairie grew mountain-high, amazed with light, and were obscured. The people in the village ran — ran — and the fire shot them down with its red and gold arrows and whirled on, crumpling the tepees so that the skins of them popped like corn. Then the bodies of the dead in the trees took fire with a hard smoke, and the burning of the cottonwoods choked Many Swans as he fled. His nostrils smelt the dead, and he was very sick and could not move. Then the fire made a ring round him, and he stood in the midst by the Burnt River and wrung his hands until the skin tore. He took the thing he wore and tried to strip it off in the fork of a tree, but it did not come off at all. He cried: "Ka! Ka! Ka! Ka!" and leapt into the river and tried to drown the thing, but when he rose it rose with him and came out of the water gleaming so that its wake rippled red and silver a long way down the stream.

Then Many Swans lamented bitterly and cried: "The thing I wanted is had," but he had the thing and he could not part from it. He rolled in the stones and the bushes to scrape it off, but it clung to him and grew in his flesh like hair. Therefore Many Swans dragged himself up to go on, although the heat of the burnt grass scorched his feet and everything was dead about him. He heard nothing, for there was nobody to mock any more.

Mist rises along the river bottoms, and ghost-voices hiss an old death-song to a false, faint tune. The branches of willows beat on the moon, pound, pound, with a thin, far sound, shaking and shrilling the wonder tale, the thunder tale, of a nation's killing:

The Nation's drum has fallen down.
Beat — beat — and a double beat!
Ashes are the grass of a lodge-pole town.

Rattle — rattle — on a moon that is sinking.

Out of the North come drift winds wailing.

Beat — beat — and a double beat!
In the frost-blue West, a crow is ailing.

The streams, the water streams, are shrinking!

He gave an acre and we gave him brass.

Beat — beat — and a double beat!
Beautiful and bitter are the roses in the grass.

Rattle — rattle — on a moon that is sinking.

A knife painted red and a knife painted black.

Beat — beat — and a double beat!
Green mounds under a hackmatack.
The streams, the water streams, are shrinking!

Is there Summer in the Spring?
Who will bring the South?

Beat — beat — and a double beat!
Shall honey drop from the green snake's mouth?

Rattle — rattle — on a moon that is sinking.

A red-necked buzzard in an incense tree.

Beat — beat — and a double beat!
And a poison leaf from Gethsemane.
The streams, the water streams, are shrinking.

Now Many Swans walked over cinders, and there was no sprig or root that the fire had left. Therefore he grew weaker day by day, and at night he lay awake

tortured for food, and he prayed to the Earth, saying: "Mother Earth have pity on me and give me to eat," but the ears of the Earth were stopped with cinders. Then, after five sleeps, suddenly before him grew a bush of service-berries which the fire had not taken. Many Swans gathered the berries and appeased his hunger. He said: "The berries that grow are blessed, for now I shall live." Yet he knew that he did not want to live, only his hunger raged fiercely within him and he could not stand against it. He took cinders and powdered them, and mixed them with river water, and made his body black, and so he set his back to the river and his face to the mountains and journeyed on.

Up and over the Backbone-of-the-World went Many Swans. Above the peaks of solitude hang the winds of all directions, and because there are a multitude of winds they can hold fire and turn it. Therefore Many Swans felt leaves once more about his face, and the place was kind to his eyes with laurels, and quaking aspens, and honeysuckle-trees. All the bushes and flowers were talking, but it was not about Many Swans. The oaks boasted of their iron sinews: "Fire is a plaything, a ball to be tossed and flung away," and they rustled their leaves and struck their roots farther into the moist soil. The red firs stirred at the challenge: "In Winter your leaves are dry," they called to the oaks, "then the fire-bear can eat you. But our leaves are never dry. They are whips to sting the lips of all fires." But the cedars and the pines said nothing, for they knew that nobody would believe them if they spoke.

Now when the hemlocks ran away from him, and the cold rocks glittered with snow, Many Swans knew that he stood at the peak of the world, and again the longing for men came upon him. "I will descend into a new country," he said. "I will be very careful not to swing the sacred implement, truly it kills people so that they have no time to escape." He thought he could do it, he believed himself, and he knew no rest because of his quest for men.

There was no way to find, but Many Swans went down through the firs, and the yellow pines, and the maples, to a white plain which ran right, and left, and forward, with only a steep sky stopping it very far off; and the sun on the plain was like molten lead pressing him down and his tongue rattled with thirst. So he lifted himself against the weight of the sun and wished a great wish for men and went on, with his desire sobbing in his heart.

To the North was sand, to the East was sand, to the West was sand, to the South was sand, and standing up out of the sand the great flutes of the cactus-trees beckoned him, and flung their flowers out to tempt him — their wax-white flowers, their magenta flowers, their golden-yellow flowers perking through a glass-glitter of spines; all along the ridges of the desert they called to him and he knew not which way to turn. He asked a humming-bird in a scarlet trumpet-flower, and the humming-bird answered: "Across the sunset to the Red Hills." The sun rose and set three times, and again he knew not where to go, so he asked a gilded flicker who was clicking in a giant cactus. And the flicker told him: "Across the sunset to the Red Hills." But when, after many days, he saw no hills, he thought "The birds deceived me," and he asked a desert lily: "Where shall I find men?" And the lily opened her green-and-blue-veined blossom, and discovered the pure whiteness of her heart. "Across the desert to the Red Hills," she told him, and he believed her, and, on the ninth morning after, he saw the hills, and they were heliotrope and salmon, and as the sun lifted, they were red, and when the sun was in the top of the sky, they were blood scarlet. Then Many Swans lay and slept, for he did not wish to reach the hills at nightfall lest the people should take him for an enemy and kill him.

In the morning, Many Swans got up and made haste forward to the hills, and soon he was among cornfields, and the rows of the cornfields were newly plowed and from them there came a sound of singing. Then Many Swans felt the fear

come upon him because of the thing he loathed and yet carried, and he thought "If it should kill these people!" The music of the song was so beautiful that he shed tears, but his fears overcame his longing, for already he loved these people who sang in cornfields at dawn. Many Swans hid in a tuft of mesquite bushes and listened, and the words the people were singing were these, but the tune was like a sun wind in the tree of green sticks

The white corn I am planting,
The white seed of the white corn.
The roots I am planting,
The leaves I am planting,
The ear of many seeds I am planting,
All in one white seed
Be kind! Be kind!

The blue corn I am planting,
The blue ear of the good blue corn.
I am planting tall rows of corn
The bluebirds will fly among my rows,
The blackbirds will fly up and down my rows,
The humming birds will be there between my rows,
Between the rows of blue corn I am planting

Beans I am planting
The pod of the bean is in the seed.
I tie my beans with white lightning
to bring the thunder,
The long thunder which herds the rain.
I plant the beans
Be kind! Be kind!

Squash seeds I am planting
So that the ground may be striped
with yellow,
Horizontal yellow of squash flowers,
Horizontal white of squash flowers,
Great quiches of all colours.
I tie the squash plants with the rainbow
Which carries the sun on its back.
I am planting squash-seeds.
Be kind! Be kind!

Out of the South, rain will come
whirling,
And from the North I shall see it
standing and approaching.
I shall hear it dropping on my seeds,
Lapping along the stems of my plants,
Splashing from the high leaves,
Tumbling from the little leaves.

I hear it like a river, running — running —
Among my rows of white corn, running — running —
I hear it like a leaping spring among my blue corn rows,
I hear it foaming past the bean sprouts,
I hear water gurgling among my squashes.

Descend, great cloud-water,
Spout from the mouth of the lightning,
Fall down with overturning thunder.
For the rainbow is the morning
When the sun shall raise us corn,
When the bees shall hum to the corn-blossom,
To the bean-blossom,
To the straight, low blossoms of the squashes.

Hear me sing to the rain,
To the sun,
To the corn when I am planting it,
To the corn when I am gathering it,
To the squashes when I load them on my back.
I sing and the god-people hear,
They are kind.

When the song was finished, Many Swans knew that he must not hurt this people. He swore, and even upon the sacred and terrible thing itself, to make them his safe keeping. Therefore when they returned up the trail to the Mesa, he wandered in the desert below among yellow rabbit grass and grey iceplants, and visited the springs, and the shrines full of prayer-sticks, and his heart distracted him with love so that he could not stay still.

That night he heard an elf owl calling

from a pinyon tree, and he went to the owl and sought to know the name of this people who sang in the fields at dawn. The owl answered "Do not disturb me, I am singing a love song. Who are you that you do not know that this is the land of Tusayan?" And Many Swans considered in himself "Truly I have come a long way."

Four moons Many Swans abode on the plum, eating mesquite pods and old dried nopals, but he kept away from the Mesa lest the thing he had with him should be beyond his strength to hold.

Twixt this side, twixt that side,
Twixt rock stones and sage brush,
Twixt bushes and sand,
Go the snakes a smooth way,
Belly creeping,
Sliding faster than the flash of water
on a bluebird's wing.

Twixt corn and twixt cactus,
Twixt springside and barren,
Along a cold trail
Slip the snake people
Black tip tongued Garter Snakes,
Olive blue Racer Snakes,
Whip Snakes and Rat Snakes,
Great orange Bull Snakes,
And the King of the Snakes,
With his high rings of scarlet,
His high rings of yellow,
His double high black rings,
Detesting his fellows,
The Killer of Rattlers
Rattle — rattle — rattle —
Rattle — rattle — rattle —
The Rattlers,
The Rattlesnakes
Hiss s s s!
Ah h h!
White Rattlesnakes,
Green Rattlesnakes,
Black and yellow Rattlesnakes,
Barred like tigers
Soft as panthers
Diamond Rattlesnakes
All spotted,
Six feet long
With tails of snow shine
And most awful,

Heaving wrongwise,
The fiend whisking
Swift Sidewinders
Rattlesnakes upon the desert
Coiling in a clump of greasewood,
Winding up the Mesa footpath
Who dares meet them?
Who dares stroke them?
Who dares seize them?
Rattle — rattle — rattle —
Rattle — rattle — hiss s s!

They dare, the men of Tusayan. With their eagle whips, they stroke them. With their shup bronze hands, they seize them. Run — run — up the Mesa path, dive into the kiva. The jars are ready, drop in the rattlers — Tigers, Diamonds, Sidewinders, drop in Bull Snakes, Whip Snakes, Garters, but hang the King Snake in a basket on the wall, he must not see all these Rattlesnakes, he would die of an apoplexy.

They have hunted them toward the four directions. Toward the yellow North, the blue West, the red South, the white East. Now they sit by the sand altar and smoke, chanting of the clouds and the four coloured lightning snakes who bring rain. They have made green prayer sticks with black points and left them at the shrines to tell the snake people that their festival is here. Bang! Bang! Drums! And whirl the thunder whizzers!

"Ho! Ho! Ho! Hear us!
Carry our words to your Mother
We wash you clean, Snake Brothers
We sing to you
We shall dance for you
Plead with your Mother
That she send the white and green rain,
That she look it us with the black eyes of the lightning,
So our corn ears may be double and long,
So our melons may swell as thunder-

Bang! Bang!

Over the floor of the kiva squirm the snakes, fresh from washing. Twixt this side, twixt that side, twixt toes and twixt ankles, go the snakes a smooth way, and the priests coax them with their eagle-feather whips, and turn them always backward. Rattle — rattle — rattle — snake-tails thrashing a hot air. Whizz! Clatter! Clap! Clap! Corn-gourds shaking in hard hands. A band of light down the ladder, cutting upon a mad darkness.

Cottonwood kisi flickering in a breeze, little sprigs of cotton-leaves clapping hands at Hopi people, crowds of Hopi people waiting in the Plaza to see a monstrous thing. Houses make a shadow, desert is in sunshine, priests step out of kiva.

Antelope priests in front of the kisi, making slow leg-motions to a slow time. Turtle-shell knee-rattles spill a double rhythm, arms shake gourd-rattles, goat-toes; necklaces — turquoise and sea-shell — swing a round of clashing. Striped lightning Antelopes waiting for the Snake Priests. Red-kilted Snake Priests facing them, going forward and back, coming back and over, waving the snake-whips, chanting a hundred ask-songs. Go on, go back — white — black — red blood-feather, white breath-feather, little cottonleaf hands clap — clap — He is at the flap of the kisi, they have given him a spotted rattlesnake. Put him in the mouth, kiss the Snake Brother, fondle him with the tongue.

Tripping on a quick time, they trot round the square. Rattle — rattle — goat-toes, turtle-shells, snake-tails. Hiss, oily snake-mouths; drip, wide priest-mouths over the snake-skins, wet slimy snake-skins. "Aye-ya ha! Aye-ye-he! Ha-ha-wa-ha! Oway-ha!" The red snake-whips tremble and pnt. Blur, Plaza, with running priests, with streaks of snake-bodies. The Rain-Mother's children are being honoured. They must travel before the setting of the sun.

When the town was on a roar with dancing, Many Swans heard it far down

in the plain, and he could not contain his hunger for his own kind. He felt very strong because the cool of sundown was spreading over the desert. He said, "I need fear nothing. My arms are grown tough in this place, my hands are hard as a sheep's skull. I can surely control this thing," and he set off up the path to ease his sight only, for he had sworn not to discover himself to the people. But when he turned the last point in the road, the thing in his hands shook, and said: "We shall strike that town."

Many Swans was strong, he turned and ran down the Mesa, but, as he was running, a priest passed him carrying a handful of snakes home. As the priest went by him, the thing in Many Swans' hand leapt up, and it was the King Snake. It was all ringed with red and yellow and black flames. It hissed, and looped, and darted its head at the priest and killed him. Now when the priest was dead, all the snakes he was holding burst up with a great noise and went every which way, twixt this side, twixt that side, twixt upwards, twixt downwards, twixt rock-stone and bunch-grass. And they were little slipping flames of hot fire. They went up the hill in fourteen red and black strings, and they were the strings of blood and death. The snakes went up a swift, smooth way, and Many Swans went up with them for he was mad. He beat his hands together to make a drum, and shouted "Break! Break! Break! Break!" And he thought it was the priests above singing a new song.

Many Swans reached the town, but the fire-snakes were running down all the streets. They struck the people so that they died, and the bodies took fire and were consumed. The house windows were hung with snakes who were caught by their tails and swung down, vomiting golden stars into the rain-gutters. In one of the gutters was a blue salvia plant, and as Many Swans passed, it nodded and said "Alas! Alas!" It reminded Many Swans of the flax-flowers in the sky, and his senses came back to him and he tore his clothes and his hair and cried "Kal Kal Kal Kal" a great many times. Then he beat himself on the sharp rocks and tried to crush the thing

he had, but he could not, he tried to split it, but it did not split

Many Swans saw that he was alone in the world. He lifted his eyes to the thing and cursed it, then he ran to hurl himself over the cliff. Now a boulder curled into the path and, as he turned its edge, 'The One Who Walks All Over the Sky' stood before him. Her eyes were

moons for sadness, and her voice was like the coiling of the sea. She said to him: 'I tried to love you, I tried to be kind to your people, why do you cry? You wished for it.' She took it off him and left him.

Many Swans looked at the desert. He looked at the dead town. He wept.

FUNERAL SONG FOR THE INDIAN CHIEF BLACKBIRD

*Buried Sitting Upright on a Live Horse
on a Bluff Overlooking the Missouri River*

He is dead,
Our Chief
Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai!
Our Chief
On whom has fallen a sickness,
He our Leader,
Who has grievously died

At his feet we are gathered,
Warriors, his children,
We have cut our flesh
Before his body
Our blood drips on the willow leaves,
The willows with which we have pierced
our arms
We beat the willow sticks,
We mourn our Brother, our Father,
We chant slow songs
To the listening spirit of the Great Chief
Blackbird

Yesterday,
When the sky was red
And the sun falling through it,
They called to you,
Your ancestors,
From the middle of the sky,
From a cloud, circling above you,
They pronounced your name

He is dead,
Our Leader
Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai!
Our Chief, Blackbird
Beat the willow sticks,
Let our blood drop before him

You have sung your death song,
To your friends you have sung it,
To the grasses of the prairie,
To the river,
Cutting the prairie
As the moon cuts the sky

See, we lift you,
The blood of our willow wounds drops
upon you
We dress you in your shirt of white buck-
skin,
We fasten your leggings of mountain
goat skin,
We lay upon your shoulders
Your robe of the skin of a young buffalo
bull
We clasp your necklace of grizzly bears'
claws
About your neck

We place upon your head
Your war bonnet of eagle plumes
All this you have commanded
Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai!
Strike the willow sticks
You shall depart
From among us
It is time for you to depart,
You are going on a long journey.

Up to the tall cliff
We carry you
Our blood drips upon the ground.
And your horse,
Your white horse,
Goes with you
He follows you
Softly we lead him

After your body,
After your not heavy body
Shrunk in death.

The hawk is flying
Halfway up the sky.
So will you be halfway above the earth.
On the high bluff
You are standing.
The ground trembles
As we place you upon it.

You are dead,
But you hear our songs.
You are dead,
But we lift you on your White Weasel
Horse.

He trembles as the earth trembles.
His skin quivers
At the loose touch of your knees.
Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai!
Leader of the Warriors
To the spirit land you are going.
Our blood cries to you,
Dropping upon the willow-leaves.

Who is this that rides the Wolf Trail at
evening?
Blackbird,
Chief of his people.
His bow is in his hand,
Scarlet the heads of his arrows,
The feathers of his shield sweep the
ground.
Lift him,
Lift him,
Lift the War Chief
To his light-legged horse.
We will stand,
We will see him,
We shall behold his body
Set high on a high horse,
On his own horse,
His white horse of many battles.
We shall see him
As we desire.

You are bright as the sun among trees,
You are dazzling as the long sun running
among the prairie grasses,
You pierce our eyes as a thunder-cloud
rising against the wind.
Who shall be to us as he,
Our Chief?
Your white horse shivers and is still,

He will carry you safely over the Wolf
Trail
To those who are talking about you,
Calling to you to come.

Lay little sods of earth
About the feet of the white horse.
Gather those which contain the seeds
Of camass, and puccoon, and lupin.
Watch that the seeds of the looks-like-a-
plume flower
Spread the earth we are laying against his
sides,
So that, in the time when the ducks and
geese shed their feathers,
The black breasts may drop from the sky
upon them, singing,
As our blood drops on these sods.

Ai! Ai! Ai! Ai!
Proudly he sits his white horse,
His head-feathers make a noise in the
wind.
Great Chief,
Father of people,
Facing the cleft hill,
Facing the long, moving river,
Waiting briefly for the edge of night,
Abiding the coming of the stars,
Poised to leap,
To strike the star-way with the mighty
energy
Of your powerful horse,
To take the Wolf Trail with the shout
of cunning,
To ride streaming over the great sky.
We watch you,
We exalt you,
We cheer you with our hunting-cries,
Our battle-songs,
To the beating of our willow-sticks you
shall ride,
And he, your White Weasel Horse,
Shall bear you above the clouds
To the tepces beyond the star-which-
never-moves.

When the waters are calm
And the fog rises,
Will you appear?
Then will come up out of the waters
Your brothers,
The Otters.
From beneath the high hill
Your voice will echo forth.

Your voice shall be as metal
In the spaces of the sky,
Your war club shall resound through the
sky.

Like your brothers,
The Eagles,
Your voice shall descend to us
Down the slopes of the wind.
You will go round the world,
You will go over and under the world,
You will come to the Place of Spirits.
Aii Aii Aii
We are pitying ourselves
That he, our Father, is dead.
He is carried like thunder
Across the sky.
The trees are afraid of the wind,
So are we afraid of the whirlwind of our
enemies

Without our Chief to lead us.
When the rain comes
On the wings of crows
In the Spring,
We shall fear even the voice of the owl,
Sitting alone in our lodges
Now that you are gone.

How many the count of your battles!
At night,
When the dogs were still,
Going softly
You would seek the villages of your ene-
mies to destroy them.
You who, all night long,
Were standing up until daylight.
You fought as one who dances singing:
"Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh!
Death I bring!
I dance upon those I kill,
I scalp those I kill,
I laugh above those I kill.
Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh!"
Your enemies were not able to shoot,
Their bow-strings were wet
And the sinews stretched
And slipped off the ends of the bows.
Your arrows were red
As grasshoppers' wings
When they fly high in the sun.
Your enemies were ashamed before you
Since you cut off their heads
And tied their scalps to your bridle-rein.

Now you journey alone,
Journey along the Wolf Trail
Wearily among the little stars.

Aii Aii Aii Aii
It is time for you to depart,
You are going on a long journey.
You are going in your shoes.
You cannot travel,
Your feet are weary with many steps,
But your round-hoofed horse shall step
for you,
He shall bear you over the trail of stars.
The deer walks alone,
Singing of his shining horns,
So shall you walk
Singing of the great deeds
You have done in this world.

Leader of the Warriors,
Where are you?
We, your children,
Sing a song of five sounds
To your departing spirit.
We sing a song of vermilion,
We stain our hands
And mark the palms of them in red
On the flanks of your horse.
We heap the sods about him,
We hold his head
And stuff his nostrils and ears with earth.
We cover your arms, your shoulders,
Your glittering face,
The feathers flying above your head.
The water-birds will alight upon your
body,
We shall see your grave from below,
From the place where the snipe stand
above their shadows in the water.

Aii Aii Aii Aii
The Morning Star and the Young Morn-
ing Star
Are together in the sky above the prairie.
How far have you already gone from us?
Our blood drips slowly,
The wounds are closing,
It is time we pulled out the willow-
sprays
And left this place
Before the rising of the sun.

WITCH-WOMAN

"Witch!
 Witch!
 Cursed black heart,
 Cursed gold heart striped with black;
 Thighs and breasts I have loved;
 Lips virgin to my thought,
 Sweeter to me than red figs,
 Lying tongue that I have cherished,
 Is my heart wicked?
 Are my eyes turned against too bright a
 sun?
 Do I dazzle, and fear what I cannot see?
 It is grievous to lose the heart from the
 body,
 Death which tears flesh from flesh is a
 grievous thing,
 But death is cool and kind compared to
 this,
 This horror which bleeds and kindles,
 These kisses shot with poison,
 These thoughts cutting me like red knives.
 Lord,
 Thunderer,
 Swift rider on the clashing clouds,
 Ruler over brass heavens,
 Mighty ruler of the souls of men,
 Be merciless to me if I mistake this
 woman,
 As I will be merciless if I learn a bitter
 truth.
 I burn green oil to you,
 Fresh oil from fair young olives,
 I pour it upon the ground;
 As it daps I invoke your clemency
 To send a sign.
 Witches are moon-birds,
 Witches are the women of the false,
 beautiful moon.
 To-night the sign,
 Maker of men and gods,
 To-night when the full-bellied moon
 swallows the stars.
 Grant that I know.
 Then will I offer you a beastly thing and
 a broken:
 Or else the seed of both
 To be your messengers and slaves forever,
 My sons, and my sons' sons, and their
 sons after;
 And my daughters and theirs throughout
 the ages

For your handmaidens and bedfellows as
 you command.
 How the white sword flickers!
 How my body twists in the circle of my
 anguish!
 Behold, I have loved this woman,
 Even now I cry for her,
 My arms weaken,
 My legs shake and crumble.
 Strengthen my thews,
 Cord my sinews to withstand a testing.
 Let me be as iron before this thing,
 As flashing brass to see,
 As lightning to fall;
 As rain melting before sunshine if I have
 wronged the woman,
 The red flame takes the oil,
 The blood of my toes is sucked into fire
 As my blood is sucked into the fire of
 your wrath and mercy,
 O just and vengeful God."

Body touches body. How sweet the
 spread of loosened bodies in the coil
 of sleep, but a gold-black thread is
 between them. An owl calls deep
 in the wood.

Can you see through the night, woman,
 that you stare so upon it? Man.
 what spark do your eyes follow in
 the smouldering darkness?

She stirs. Again the owl calling. She
 rises. Foot after foot as a panther
 treads, through the door—a minute
 more and the fringes of her goat-
 skin are brushing the bushes. She
 pushes past brambles, the briars
 catch little claws in her goat-skin.
 And he who watches? As the tent
 lap flaps back, he leaps. The bear
 of the white sword leaps, and follows
 her. Blur of moonshine before—
 behind. He walks by the light of a
 green-oil oath, and the full moon
 floats above them both.

Seeded grass is a pool of grey. Ice-white,
 cloud-white, frosted with the spray
 of the sharp-edged moon. Croon—
 croon—the wind in the feathered
 tops of the grass. They pass—the
 witch-white woman with the gold-

black heart, the flower-white woman — and his eyes startle, and answer the bow curve of her going up the hill.
The night is still, with the wind, and the moon, and an owl calling.

On the sea side of a hill where the grass lies tilted to a sheer drop down, with the sea splash under as the waves are thrown upon a tooth of rock. Shock and shatter of a golden track, and the black sucking back. The draw of his breath is hard and cold, the draw of the sea is a rustle of gold.

Behind a curl of granite stone the man lies prone. The woman stands like an obelisk, and her blue-black hair has a serpent whisk as the wind lifts it up and scatters it apart. Witch-heart, are you gold or black? The woman stands like a marble tower, and her loosened hair is a thunder-shower twisted across with lightnings of burnt gold.

Naked and white, the matron moon urges the woman. The undulating sea fingers the rocks and winds stealthily over them. She opens the goat-skin wide — it falls.

The walls of the world are crashing down, she is naked before the naked moon, the Mother Moon, who sits in a courtyard of emerald with six black slaves before her feet. Six — and a white seventh who dances, turning in the moonlight, flinging her arms about the soft air, despairingly lifting herself to her full height, straining tiptoe away from the slope of the hill.

Witch-breasts turn and turn, witch-thighs burn, and the feet strike always faster upon the grass. Her blue-black hair in the moon-haze blazes like a fire of salt and myrrh. Sweet as branches of cedar, her arms; fairer than heaped grain, her legs; as grape clusters, her knees and ankles; her back as white grapes with smooth skins.

She runs through him with the whipping

of young fire. The desire of her is thongs and weeping. She is the green oil to his red flame. He peers from the curl of granite stone. He hears the moan of the crawling sea, and sees — as the goat-skin falls so the flesh falls. . . .

And the triple Heaven-wall falls down, and the Mother Moon on a ruby throne is near as a bow-shot above the hill.

Goat-skin, here, flesh-skin there, a skeleton dancing in the moon-green air, with a white, white skull and no hair. Lovely as ribs on a smooth sand shore, bright as quartz-stones speckling a moor, long and narrow as Winter reeds, the bones of the skeleton. The wind in the rusty grass hums a funeral-chant set to a jig. Dance, silver bones, dance a whirl-igig in a crepitation of lust. The waves are drums beating with slacked guts. Inside the skeleton is a gold heart striped with black, it glitters through the clacking bones, throwing an inverted halo round the stamping feet.

Scarlet is the ladder dropping from the moon. Liquid is the ladder — like water moving yet keeping its shape.

The skeleton mounts like a great grey ape, and its bones rattle; the rattle of the bones is the crack of dead trees bitten by frost. The wind is desolate, and the sea moans.

But the ruby chair of Mother Moon shudders, and quickens with a hard fire. The skeleton has reached the last rung. It melts and is absorbed in the burning moon. The moon? No moon, but a crimson rose afloat in the sky. A rose? No rose, but a black-tongued lily. A lily? No lily, but a purple orchid with dark, writhing bars.

Trumpets mingle with the sea-drums, scalding trumpets of brass, the wind-hum changes to a wail of many voices, the owl has ceased calling.

“White sword are you thirsty?
I give you the green blood of my heart.

<p>I give you her white flesh cast from her black soul. Thunderer, Vengeful and cruel Father, God of Hate, The skins of my eyes have dropped,</p>	<p>With fire you have consumed the oil of my heart. Take my drunken sword, Some other man may need it. She was sweeter than red figs. O cursed God!"</p>
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THE RING AND THE CASTLE

A BALLAD

"Benjamin Bailey, Benjamin Bailey, why
do you wake at the stroke of three?"
"I heard the hoot of an owl in the forest,
and the creak of the wind in the alder-
tree."

"Benjamin Bailey, Benjamin Bailey, why
do you stare so into the dark?"
"I saw white circles twining, floating,
and in the centre a molten spark."

"Why are you restless, Benjamin Bailey?
Why do you fling your arms so wide?"
"To keep the bat's wings from coming
closer and push the grey rat from my
side."

"What are you muttering, Benjamin
Bailey? The room is quiet, the moon
is clear."

"The trees of the forest are curling, sway-
ing, writhing over the heart of my
Dear."

"Lie down and cover you, Benjamin
Bailey, you're raving, for never a wife
or child

Has blessed your hearthstone; it is the
fever, which startles your brain with
dreams so wild."

"No wife indeed," said Benjamin Bailey,
and his blue nails picked at the bed-
quilt's edge.

"I gathered a rose in another man's gar-
den and hid it from sight in a haw-
thorn hedge.

I made her a chamber where green boughs
rustled, and plaited river-grass for the
floor,

And three times ten moonlight nights I

loved her, with my old hound stretch-
ing before the door.

Then out of the North a knight came
riding, with crested helm and pointed
sword.

"Where is my wife?" said the knight to
the people. 'My wife! My wife!' was
his only word.

He tied his horse to the alder yonder, and
stooped his crest to enter my door.

'My wife,' said the knight, and a steel-
grey glitter flashed from his armour
across the floor.

Then I lied to that white-faced knight,
and told him the lady had never been
seen by me;

And when he had loosed his horse from
the alder, I bore him a mile of com-
pany.

I turned him over the bridge to the val-
ley, and waved him Godspeed in the
twilight grey.

And I laughed all night as I toyed with
his lady, clipping and kissing the hours
away.

The sun was kind and the wind was
gentle, and the green boughs over our
chamber sang,

But on the Eastern breeze came a tinkle
whenever the bells in the Abbey rang.

Dang! went the bell, and the lady heark-
ened — once, twice, thrice — and her
tears sprang forth.

"'Twas three of the clock when I was
wedded," quoth she, 'in the castle to
the North.

They praised us for a comely couple, in
truth my Lord was a joy to see;
I gave him my troth for a golden dowry,
and he gave me this ring on the stroke
of three.

Three years I lived with him fair and
stately, and then we quarrelled, as
lovers will.
He swore I wed for his golden dowry,
and I that he loved another still.

I knew right well that never another had
crossed the heart of my dearest Lord,
But still my rage waxed hot within me
until, one morning, I fled abroad.

All down the flickering isles of the forest
I rode till at twilight I sat me down,
And there a-weeping you found and took
me, as one lifts a leaf which the wind
has blown.

But to-night my ring burns hot on my
finger, and my Lord's face shines
through the curtained door.
And the bells beat heavy against my tem-
ples, two long strokes, and one stroke
more.

Loose me now, for your touch is terror,
my heart is a hollow, my arms are
wind;
I must go out once more and wander,
seeking the forest for what I shall find.

Then I fell upon her and stifled her
speaking till the bells died away in the
rustling breeze,
And so I held her dumb until morning
with smothered lips, but I knew no
case.

And every night that the bells came
clearly striking three strokes, like a
heavy stone
I would seal her lips, but even as I kissed
her, behind her clenched teeth I could
hear her moan.

The nights grew longer, I had the lady,
her pale blue veins and her skin of
milk,

But I might have been clasping a white
wax image straightly stretched on a
quilt of silk.

Then curdled anger foamed within me,
and I tore at her finger to take the
ring,
The red gold ring which burned her spirit
like some bewitched, unhallowed thing.

High in the boughs of our leafy chamber,
the lady's sorrowing died away.
All night I fought for the red gold circle,
all night, till the oak-trees reddened
to day.

For two nights more I strove to take it,
the red gold circlet, the ring of fear,
But on the third in a blood-red vision I
drew my sword and cut it clear.

Severed the ring and severed the finger,
and slew my Dear on the stroke of
three;
Then I dug a grave beneath the oak-trees,
and buried her there where none could
see.

I took the ring and the bleeding finger,
and sent a messenger swiftly forth,
An amazing gift to my Lord I sent them,
in his lonely castle to the North.

He died, they say, at sight of my present.
I laughed when I heard it — 'Hee!
Hee! Hee!'
But every night my veins run water and
my pores sweat blood at the stroke of
three."

"Benjamin Bailey, Benjamin Bailey, seek
repentance, your time is past."
"My Dearest Dear lies under the oak-
trees, pity indeed that the ring held
fast."

"Benjamin Bailey, Benjamin Bailey, sin-
ners repent when they come to die."
"Toll the bell in the Abbey tower, and
under the oak-trees let me lie."

GAVOTTE IN D MINOR

She wore purple, and when other people
 slept
 She slept lightly — lightly — in her ruby
 powdered slippers
 Along the flags of the East portico
 And the moon slowly lifting the heights
 of cloud
 Touched her face so that she bowed
 Her head, and held her hand to her eyes
 To keep the white shining from her. And
 she was wise,
 For gazing at the moon was like looking
 on her own dead face
 Passing alone in a wide place,
 Chill and uncossed, always above
 The hot protuberance of life. Love to her
 Was morning and a great stir
 Of trumpets and fire-women and sharp
 sun.
 As she had begun, so she would end,
 Walking alone to the last bend
 Where the portico turned the wall.
 And her slipper's sound
 Was scarce as loud upon the ground
 As her tear's fall.
 Her long white fingers crisped and clung
 Each to each, and her weary tongue
 Rattled always the same cold speech:
 Gold was not made to lie in grass,
 Silver dints at the touch of brass,
 The days pass.
 Lightly, softly, wearily,
 The lady paces, dreamily
 Listening to the half shrill croon
 Leaves make on a moony Autumn night
 When the windy light

Runs over the ivy evenly.
 A branch at the corner cocks an obscene
 eye
 As she passes — passes — by, and by —
 A hand stretches out from a column's
 edge,
 Faces float in a phosphorescent wedge
 Through the points of arches, and there
 is speech
 In the carved roof-groins out of reach,
 A love-word, a lust-word, shivers and
 mocks
 The placid stroke of the village clocks.
 Does the lady hear?
 Is any one near?
 She jeers at life, must she wed instead
 The cold dead?
 A marriage-bed of moist green mold,
 With an over-head tester of beaten gold
 A splendid price for a splendid scorn,
 A tombstone pedigree snarled with thorn
 Clouding the letters and the fleur-de-lis,
 She will have them in granite for her
 heart's chill ease.

I set the candle in a draught of air
 And watched it swale to the last thin
 flair,
 They laid her in a fair chamber hung
 with arras,
 And they wept her virgin soul.
 The arras was woven of the story of
 Minos and Dictynna.
 But I grieved that I could no longer hear
 the shuffle of her feet along the portico,
 And the ruffling of her train against the
 stones.

THE STATUE IN THE GARDEN

I

It was not a large garden, as gardens go,
 But carefully patterned with row after
 row
 Of flower beds edged by low, clipped box
 In the quaintly prim and orthodox
 Manner of seventeen eighty or there-
 abouts.

A couple of dolphins spurted out spout
 Of silver-blue water from a couple of
 fountains,
 And the distant sky was suggestive of
 mountains.
 I say suggestive, for it lay with the wind
 If the sky were thicker or thinner skinned
 Even when the air was without a vapour
 All one saw was a luminous blur

Which might have been a cloud of a
 trick
 Of the eyes, smarting under the too
 sharp prick
 Of the very clearness, till you looked
 again
 And saw it still. It was never plain,
 But hung like a whisper of something
 bright
 In the large, slow blue, about half the
 height
 From horizon to zenith. This dolomite
 Which, for better disguise, I shall call
 Ghost Peak,
 Was considered by Julius to be the unique
 Cause of his coming, and presently buy-
 ing,
 The charming old house he was now
 occupying.
 A writer may live where his fancies dic-
 tate
 Provided his copy be kept up to date,
 And Julius had certainly earned some re-
 pose
 And might, if he wanted, play dominoes,
 Or whist, or billiards, for the rest of his
 life,
 Might even consider the taking a wife.
 Not Julius, he sought only lapses of hours
 Within reach of the sight and scent of
 flowers.
 He loved the languor of faded chintz,
 The strange nostalgia of coloured prints
 To hang above Sheraton chairs, the sham
 And exquisite classics of the brothers
 Adam.
 His garden delighted him through and
 through,
 With its peacocks and unicorns clipped
 in yew,
 And the broad lines of the gravel walks,
 Firm and flat between tall stalks
 Of fox-glove, or monk's-hood, down
 which to betake
 Himself to the edge of the long green
 lake
 Which lay at the foot of the garden-
 close —
 And over all the Ghost Peak rose.
 On the days when it did; when it didn't,
 he fought
 A weird depression which clenched his
 thought
 And seemed to squeeze it between cold
 claws.

He harried his soul in a search for laws
 Of the bonds of man with things, the
 caress
 Of awe and horror in loveliness.
 He burned his brain in a search to find
 What the Ghostly Mountain meant to
 his mind.
 What his chairs and tables held him by,
 Whether or not he had heard a sly
 Rustle, as he passed, from the peacock
 yews.
 Once he thought that the cockatoos
 On the chintz of his arm-chair flapped
 their wings.
 These were most fearful and joyous
 things.
 The mellow place had a sort of spell,
 And it suited him thoroughly, blissfully
 well.
 He was tired out with the old routine
 Of man and man, now something be-
 tween
 Held him away and apart. Intense
 Became his ultra-commonsense,
 And he was happy and preened himself
 On being an unusual sort of elf,
 Not feeling the need of his fellows at all.
 Julius was riding for a fall.
 One day his luck, or his fate, or his
 fiend,
 (Something sardonic, at least) intervened
 Between him and the comfortable life
 he was leading,
 And suggested a walk in the town. Too
 much reading
 Had made his head buzz, so he put on
 his hat
 And started out blithely, considering that
 This bright afternoon was an excellent
 season
 To visit a shop he had not, for some rea-
 son,
 Yet entered. An antiquity dealer's, of
 course.
 Such gentry, he mused, were the clear
 single source
 Of his pleasures. How gaily he walked
 down the street!
 I might almost say strutted, so very re-
 plete
 Was he with good temper. The shop-
 door stood wide,
 And Julius, poor devil, stepped squarely
 inside.

II

The place was dim, with shafts of dusty
 light
 Shocking the gloom to colour On the
 night
 A grim old cabinet whose worm-holed
 wood
 Was black as iron reared its vastitude
 Quite out of sight among the smoky
 rafters
 Its front was carved with the grinning
 laughter
 Of broken faced, libidinous dwarfs who
 clung
 Among the twistings of a sulky tongue
 That proved itself a vine by flinging
 clusters
 Of grapes out here and there, which,
 through the dust blurs,
 Shimmered with subtle polished, purple
 lustres
 The thing was most intriguing, harsh, and
 fine
 But like a thunder cloud which breaks
 the line
 Of open clearness in a Summer sky
 Worm-eaten oak could scarcely qualify
 Among his painted satin wood escurtoires,
 His Wedgwood vases and majolicas
 "The eighteenth century is my period,"
 He told the shopman, who answered with
 a nod,
 And forthwith guided him among the
 maze
 Of torn brocaded chairs, the chipping
 glaze
 Of things which once were lacquer, and
 the traps
 Of sprawling andirons with trivets on
 their hips
 Into a little yard behind the shop
 All full of muns, and columns and a crop
 Of marble Mercuries, and Venuses, and
 Floris,
 Of cavaliers in *bautas* and black silk
 masked signors
 The shopman waved his hand and turned
 away
 Well, Julius take your stock of the array,
 But never again can there be yesterday
 As you will recollect I dare to say,
 Though sportsmen keep stiff upper lips
 and paw

The things were well enough at five yards
 distance
 But at a closer view did not entrance
 Julius, discouraged, was turning to go in
 When some conceit of colour, vaguely
 seen
 Between two statues, struck his eager
 sense
 And set him threading through the very
 dense
 Concourse of mediocre marbles Suddenly
 She, charming feminine creature, held his
 eye
 The scene was a dazzle in his head,
 But what he saw by every honest measure
 Had not this shimmering denied him
 leisure
 To contemplate beyond his eager pleas-
 ure,
 Was just a garden figure made of lead
 A garden figure Yes, but what a one!
 Bright as a flower under a white sun,
 Vigorous and frail, with tints as gay as
 those
 Which deck the saints in Fra Angelico's
 Best adorations Dressed in pink and
 blue,
 A rose red bodice, whence a kerchief flew
 Streaming behind her on a hidden wind
 Her azure skirt was gathered up and
 pinned
 A little to one side, her stockings shone
 As though of very silk, and she had on
 The blackest, shiniest pair of buckled
 shoes
 That ever bore a maiden through the
 dews
 Of a Summer morning Then there was
 her hat
 Of yellow straw, beribboned, wide, and
 flat
 Her face and hands were all that hands
 and face
 Might be in hue and shapeliness, their
 grace
 A balance of perfections At her belt,
 In her up curving arm, she held a nose
 gay
 Of marigolds and phlox, the lively wry
 In which these flowers were modelled
 made a play
 Of movement seen among them, and the
 scent

Just on the point of coming — yes, Julius
 smelt
 Their pungent bitter sweetness as he bent
 A little farther forward, then it went
 Fading away, and Julius could have sworn
 The lady smiled a little more Was it
 scorn
 Or only the shadow from the maple tree?
 What was it Julius saw or didn't see?
 He scarcely stopped to wonder Back he
 hurried
 Into the shop, and though a trifle flur-
 ried
 Achieved a tolerable bargain, for our
 hero
 Was a shrewd business man, as you must
 know
 Well that was done, the figure to be de-
 livered
 Did Julius hear a rusty sound which quiv-
 ered
 Down the old cabinet, cracking in the
 heart?
 Those grinning dwarfs pursued him to
 the street,
 He felt their obscene jaws stretching and
 gobbling
 That cabinet was a disgusting thing,
 A mouldering carcass which needed bury-
 ing
 And then he straight forgot it, thinking
 where,
 Beside which tree and close to which
 parterre,
 He should place his little leaden Jardin-
 ere

III

That night the sun sank in a wheel of
 purple flame
 The Ghost Peak floated, an unapproach-
 able purity, in the opposite sky
 The lake was a violent splendour with no
 further shore
 But Julius had chosen the place for his
 statue,
 He was content to sit on a garden bench
 and smoke,
 And watch the white lilies fuse into in-
 candescence under the fading of the
 sky
 At the end of a long vista,
 Near and not too near, a fountain,
 Beneath an acacia whose drooping golden

chains of flowers brushed her hat and
 shoulder,
 Stood the little garden maiden,
 A gaiety of colour in a green and gold
 shade
 Her pinks and blue, and yellows were
 like the tinkling of glass bells to his
 senses
 A front foot lightly, firmly advanced,
 A back foot just on its tiptoe,
 She paused, waiting a farther reason for
 coming forward,
 Abiding the final chord of a rhythm not
 yet completed
 A dancer without music,
 A walker without a goal,
 Seeking a purpose to fulfil a movement
 Unwittingly begun
 Half bold, half shy, and wholly alluring,
 Julius congratulated himself on having
 added to his garden
 Just the touch it needed,
 And more than ever, felt no concern to
 leave it.

Summer!

Summer!

Great gusts of surging Summer,
 A breeze of perfume making its own
 wind!
 Butterflies flickered among orange lilies,
 Ruby throated humming birds drank
 from climbing nasturtiums
 Hanging in a vanishing whirl of wings
 At night, the garden was a bowl of fire
 flies,
 And, when the moon rose, the Ghost
 Peak, suddenly, silently visible,
 Bloomed in the half height of the sky
 A fire fly lit on the breast of the statue,
 "As it might have been a diamond,"
 thought Julius,
 "I had bought for her on Midsummer
 Day"
 He was pleased with the faucy,
 And slipped his ring on the finger of the
 statue
 To see it gleam in the moonlight
 Pricks of sapphire, ripples of rose,
 Basilisk eyes which open and close,
 How the light of the moon ran across the
 diamond!
 How it splashed deep down in the facets
 of the stone
 And flung up sprays of iris and maroon

Julius played the tale of lover to his dream
 Until the moon set,
 But when he tried to pull the ring off,
 It held instead
 Caught in the crook of a knuckle of lead,
 And the white stone was red — red —
 And in its heart lay the bright, coiled
 thread

Of a many coloured snake with an eye in
 its head
 And there were grimaces
 Of misshapen faces
 Peering out of a green snake tree
 The diamond glittered horribly,
 For the eye made a light
 Which broke through the night
 In a sort of bungling, dazzling flight
 That splintered the garden's symmetry
 The trees were so tall
 They had no tops at all,
 And the lake stood straight like a painted
 sea

Then came the dark
 And the spark of the scratch
 From a lighted match
 As Julius sought to take the ring
 But he could not, it continued to cling
 Julius laughed
 "Good night, Madonna del Giardino,"
 Said he,
 "You may give the jewel back to me
 To-morrow"
 And he went in to bed

But not to-morrow,
 Or the morrow, or the next,
 Could he take off the ring Julius was
 perplexed
 It was safe enough, for who would seek
 gems
 On a garden figure's finger, and as all his
 stratagems
 Had failed, why Julius left the matter
 where it was
 In fact, he grew to think of it as
 An added touch of coquetry
 To the statue's charm, and let it be.

A week or two of amazing weather
 He and the statue posed together
 Julius was never more enamoured
 Of his quaint old house, but the garden
 clamoured
 With loud throat notes of yellow and red,
 An orchestra in every bed,

The blaring brass of late Summer flowers
 In the early morning, the garden's blaze
 Was softened by a half Autumnal haze,
 But by noon the colours were deafening
 I am not responsible for the sting
 Of such a muddle of metaphors,
 They were Julius's, and what was worse
 He made many such as he sat by the
 fountain,

Under the gleam of his Vision, the
 Mountain,
 Playing a game he delighted in
 That his garden lady was feminine
 Flesh and blood to his masculine
 Desire, a proper person before whom to
 kneel

The game as he played it became almost
 real

It was well no gardener was hovering
 round

To overhear poor Julius expound
 His love in his best poetic style
 I fear the man might have been tempted
 to smile,

Or rather, more possibly, since persons so
 menial

Find everything out of routine uncon-
 genial,

He might even have taken his master for
 mad,

A condition of things which, I hasten to
 add,

Was not so The truth is man is so multi-
 plex

He confuses himself with his this and his
 that,

And carries round constantly under his
 hat

A thousand odd notions Now 'twas
 nothing but sex

Deprived its due reason, which set Julius
 sighing

Before a lead statue instead of compli-
 ing

With all mystic wisdom and seeking a
 woman

Who, whatever she lacked, would be cer-
 tainly human

All the long Summer days, and soft Sum-
 mer nights,

Julius sat by his statue, and sometimes
 the flights

Of his fancy (or eyesight) made him
 think he detected

A twitch or a shiver, he almost suspected
 She might some day speak. So a month
 passed away,
 Then a veer in the wind brought a cold
 rainy day.
 No sitting and soaking for hours together,
 And Julius was in for a real "spell of
 weather."
 Like wires across the landscape fell the
 rain,
 The lean, swift wind became a hurricane,
 Leaves rocketed along the air, the lash-
 ing trees
 Thundered as they drove their quivering
 knees
 Deep in the muddy grass, some leapt and
 screamed
 As a branch broke and left the trunk all
 seamed
 With the running scar. The windows
 creaked like bones
 As the old house raged and tore on its
 foundation stones.
 Two days the fury lasted, then a smooth
 And sudden calm fell with a change of
 wind,
 But still the sky seemed a grey marble
 veined
 With spots and drops of black. Like a
 broken tooth,
 The ancient sycamore stood with its
 stumps
 All hollow to the rainfall. Where were
 clumps
 Of flowers was beaten offal; where were
 walks
 Were spaces littered with the rotting
 stalks
 Of headless plants. Beyond was only mist;
 A hatching of water hid the sudden twist
 Of the path to the Dolphin Fountain.
 How was she?
 But Julius had no mind to go and see.
 He wanted lights, and brick façades, and
 town,
 Somewhere where no leaves were which
 could be blown,
 A brief half-hour away these might be
 had,
 And Julius sought them eagerly, most
 glad,
 For once, to leave his consoles and
 clipped yews.
 Blood ran again along his dusty thews.

IV

He could not grasp it,
 Could not tear the shell
 Off of his soul and see it as it was
 Naked and green with life;
 Nor could he see what tendrils from it
 held
 Her tendrils. How his heart
 Long since burst open with its fruit
 spilled out,
 And so accustomed to a core of air,
 Closed round her as a sheath
 Fitted to its own kernel.
 But these things were.
 A month ago he was an amateur of taste,
 To-day his footsteps rang like clanging
 bells,
 The steps of self-sufficing, august man,
 Beating a chime upon the universe.
 A month he had been away, and when he
 came
 Once more into his garden, late Septem-
 ber
 Lay like a melted hoar-frost on the air.
 The flowers were dahlias, marigolds, and
 phlox,
 All spangled with the chilling of the haze.
 Julius smiled at them as he recollected,
 For were not phlox and marigolds the
 flowers
 His garden lady carried for her nosegay.
 He praised himself for buying the little
 figure,
 Hildegard was ashamed to see it there
 The corner by the fountain and there she
 was,
 A dazzling clarity of shape and colour,
 For now and then the fountain tossed its
 spray
 A little higher, and lightly spattered her
 So that she shone. So did the diamond
 Still on her finger.
 But Julius was ashamed to see it there
 And made a note to have it cut away
 If nothing else would free it. He went on
 Down to the lake and skipped a stone or
 two
 Across its surface, noted how faint and
 edgeless
 The Mountain was, then went indoors to
 work.
 He worked all day, and in the evening
 Sat down to write a line to Hildegard.

What is that heavy, pungent smell?
 Flowers, of course, but not in the room,
 There are none in the room. He shut
 The window long ago. Again
 He smells it, tart and sweet.
 "The phlox and marigolds are lovely
 here."

He wites, and stops astonished
 For phlox and marigolds are what he
 smells,

And all the windows tightly shut!
 He dips his pen, but instantly the scent
 Becomes submerging like a drug,
 Becomes an ether clogged with dreams.
 A step? Could there come a step
 Fanning the floor as lightly as a leaf?
 Julius startled looks, and all his muscles
 Cease to cohere, they run apart like
 sand.

He cannot move,
 He must be drugged, for right before his
 eyes

Are phlox and mangolds, and they are ar-
 ranged

In the pattern of the garden lady's nose-
 gay.

He makes himself look up, but it is tor-
 ture

Even to turn his eyes, and there she is,
 Holding out the flowers. "God in
 Heaven's name!

What is this?" He speaks, but cannot
 move an inch.

"I love you, Julius," and it is a voice
 Brittle and sharp as glass, a crimson glass.
 He hears and shudders.

"To whom are you writing, Julius?
 Not to me, and you belong to me,
 I have your ring, the ring of our be-
 trothal."

Then Julius tears his muscles from the
 coil

Of their inertia and leaps upon the statue,
 Seizing her arm, her hand—

She folds upon him, smothering his face
 with hers,

Her crimson voice enters his heavy ears.
 His mouth is stopped . . .

Oh, God, how loud the ticking of the
 clock!

How hard the sleep which will not let
 him wake!

His eyelids are iron doors he cannot lift;
 With all his strength he forces them to
 open.

The clock says eight, and sunlight fills
 the room.

There is no statue, so he must have
 dreamed.

But the letter he was writing, Hilde-
 garde's—

There is no letter!

Well, let us leave it there. This is the
 first time,

And yesterday is a thing without a shape
 Broken and scattered.

Can he build to-morrow and find his feet
 a footing?

Such perchance may be, or otherwise—
 A year has many days.

V

He might have thought the thing a dream
 And steadied himself by that.

But when a wall dissolves between two
 worlds

An honest man does not put himself off
 With sophistries. Julius was honest.

He played no tricks of thinking,
 And never got the chance. She saw to
 that.

If he went down the garden to the lake,
 She'd leave her pedestal and follow him

Pleading in her glassy, tinkling voice
 That she was his.

He tried to work. What nonsense!
 He could not see his paper, for her arm

Was always there holding out her flowers.
 She ran the scale of coquetry, now cod-
 dling him

With little Dresden china figure gestures,
 Now raging in a heavy leaden fury.

Once she took up his manuscript
 And threw it down and stamped upon it,

Then fell to weeping, bunched up on the
 floor,

All crumpled to a sad humility.
 She was very lovely, you remember,

So possibly, if Hildegard—
 And I'm not saying that there were no
 moments

When he half wished to cross the line
 Between the worlds.

It was not much to cross it,
 Just leave his bedroom door unlocked at
 night,

Or spend an Autumn evening by the
 fountain.

Once done the other world was his,
But not the two.
No man can straddle both and be alive.
And yet he touched the edge, he knew it,
For the sycamore stumps were headless
snakes some evenings

Cut jaggedly across the middle section,
The top half gone.
They jerked half-circles, breaking in the
middle

Of a long whip-tail sweep. The move-
ment snapped directly on the edge
Which kept him in this world. If he
should cross

Then he would see the snakes' heads
fully winding.

He knew this. Luckily that moment did
not come,

At least, not then. Then he would face
about

And sternly order the figure to be gone.
When he was fierce like that, she went,
Drooping and tearful underneath the
trees,

And that night he was free of her. For
other nights

She passed beneath his window, wringing
her hands,

Those little hands which kept his dia-
mond,

Or else outside his door moaning and
moaning,

Pressing her mouth to the key-hole,
Squeezing herself full length against the
door,

Beating her hands upon it. It was anguish
To listen to her sobbing in the night,
And half betrayed himself, I must be-
lieve,

It was unbearable, he grew to loathe her,
And loathed her most when most near
being conquered,

For fact disports itself with paradox.
He knew her suffering, but hers was
single,

His double-daring. And then one after-
noon,

Worn out with sleeplessness and struggle,
he saw a way

To give her what she wanted and save
himself.

She was alone, the only figure
In all the silent garden. She should have
a mate,

He would seek her one; and instantly,

Next morning, he escaped, and went to
town,

Going directly to the shop
Where he had purchased her.

The bulging, broken faces
Fleered at him with crooked mouths,
With mouths like bloody gashes
Which made red stains on the oak wood,
The black oak wood of the cabinet.

Or was it the sun?

He heard them slobbering words,
He saw the words like smoke
Rising up and wreathing the rafters.

He saw the green snake-tree
Convulsed, contorted, and swaying.

He saw it was his sycamore

As he had never seen it.

The leaves were clapping and sighing.

The leaves and the faces together,
And the long snake boughs with heads
Which swept in terrible circles.

It was like a far-off screaming

Coming through time, not space,

Tenuously coming through time.
"Fool! Fool! Fool!" in a sort of smoky
echo,

Drawing from aeons of time,
Ending dark and still in the rafters.

And he saw a moon in the rafters
Shaped like the Ghost Peak Mountain,
A moon of copper and crystal,
In the midst of the flowing smoke.

Julius stood stock still, forcing his mind
To balance itself, to gain a solid kind
Of upright thinking. With his will drawn
tense

He held it sternly to obedience.

The swirl of smoke subsided, he ceased
to hear

The whispering, the faces frozen to mere
Grotesque immovable carvings on the
doors

Of an old oak cabinet, one among scores,
An excellent specimen. When Julius
Reached to that point and could quite
see it thus,

He had, he felt, attained a victory

Over himself, or over the incubi

Which always seemed about to haunt
him. So,

Relieved, he called out loudly, "Oh,
Hullo!

Is any one here?" At this, the proprietor
Appeared and inquired what Julius had
come for.

Easily explained, to find another
Lead statue to match and set off the
other.

Again they went into the little yard,
Past the forlorn Greek goddesses who
stared

At them with dull, nicked eyeballs grined
with dust.

Gaunt in their marble robes beneath a
curst

Of mosses overscoring them like rust;
Past the poor clipped rococo cavaliers
Mimic their minuetts, the gondoliers
Vigorously rowing on the cindered grass.
At length, beyond a crucifix of brass,
The proprietor stopped and pointed.

There it was,

The very thing, exactly the right size,
A little manikin in a gardener's guise.
With yellow breeches and a purple coat;
His loose white shirt was open at the
throat.

And he was idly leaning on a scythe.
A springy fellow, well set up and lithe,
Some rustic gallant decades and decades
dead

Achieved an immortality of lead.

The thing was done, the garden lady
mated,

The shopman more than amply compen-
sated.

And Julius, charmed with his expedient,
Passed through the shop, so happily in-
tent

Upon his ruse he did not look at all
At the old black cabinet against the wall.
Is it better to see, or not to see? A ques-
tion

Weighty as Hamlet's. 'This time no sug-
gestion

Of anything untoward struck his sense.
He preened himself upon his sapience.

Most appropriate and pleasing,

The little purple-coated gentleman
Stood between a clipped peacock and a
clipped unicorn,

An engaging bit of colour beside the
achromatic vases.

He leant on his scythe,

Agreeably regarding the little lady across
the path

'The Dolphin of the fountain appeared
unconcerned,

He spat out his jet of silver-blue water as
usual,

But then this was half-past four in the
afternoon,

And the sun was very bright in the sky,
The sun which lit this world and not the
other.

It was after it had set that things —

But Julius had installed his panacea.

And he went down to the lake to skip
stones.

Even when twilight came, he was un-
molested.

"So much for that," thought Julius.

But he went back to the house a round-
about way nevertheless.

VI

Tap! Tap! Tap! The sound of those
buckled shoes!

The little stealthy noise hurt his ears like
a bruise.

Three days she had not come, and he had
been so sure

The spell was broken, even had found
himself content

To relinquish the shadowy dawn of
something impermanent,

The vague and twilight edges which seemed
to circumfuse

The real, and sometimes almost suck it
or melt it away.

Had it been pleasure or pain? Julius
could not say.

He had taken his stand on the solid when
he bought the little man.

Tap! Tap! on the gravel, the footsteps
came — they came.

And each was like a crack in his smooth
and perfect plan.

Why did she come now, after three days
of waiting?

It was he who was eager to ask an ex-
planation.

She came in swiftly and knelt with her
marigolds and phlox

Held quivering out before her in a sort of
supplication.

"For you, dear Julius," she said. He
brushed by the evasion.

"Why?" he demanded, ironically con-
scious of the paradox,

The question sounded as if he had breath-
lessly watched the clocks
And counted the moments of absence.
She took it so at once,
And with a certain majesty of loving
stepped swiftly forward.
What was his response?

Julius, Julius, are you man or superman?
Can you pass the nether space
And keep a clue for returning?
As you stand in the flesh,
This woman, this leaden woman,
What is she that her wooing has at once
the grace of flowers
And the horror of serpents?

Beware, Julius, and look
Through the window, someone is there,
And moonlight striking on the sharp
hook
Of a scythe in the blue night air.
The face is sinister which you thought so
debonair,
And the eyes are blood-grapes staring at
the little Jardinière,
And at you also, Julius.
His leaden heart is green, green as an
unripe pear,
For jealousy and hate is a choking thong
in his throat—
Her beautiful, beautiful mouth, her suck-
ing, intolerable mouth!
Julius feels his head throb, his stifled
arteries bloat.
He is the tide of a sea, the thunder about
to break,
With all his strength, he bursts himself
awake
And flees up the stair.
The long, thin vapours of the nether
space
Are closing down as he mounts the stair.
He feels a tenuous, flaccid air
Puffing against his upturned face.
The walls of the rooms are spinning and
whirling,
The tables, with legs in the air, are curl-
ing
Round and round like hoops on their
polished edges.
Unfastened curtains are flaring and fur-
ling
And racketing over the window-ledges.
A chiffonier glides across the floor

And catches at him with a golden claw.
Fire leaps from the seats of the chairs;
The flames break off and float like hairs.
The feathers of the red chintz cockatoos
Are burning convolvuli of reds and blues.
Through the heat
Comes the awful beat
Of running—running leaden feet.
Panting and moaning, her little hands
Clutching and pulling at the air, the
strands
Of her shredded petticoat dabbed with
blood,
She follows Julius, the Gardener behind
Runs with a frothy, scarlet cud
Oozing out of his mouth. His hair is
twined
With blotched and broken maple-leaves;
His arms below his rolled-up sleeves
Are hairy as apes; his scythe is a tongue
Whimpering for flesh. Julius has swung
Out of the window, he drops to the
ground.
She, with the curve of a springing hound,
Is after; and the Gardener, flung on a
bound
Like a bladder projected into light air,
Is next, and running with the others
there.

Above in the gurgling tree-tops
Are whispering, misty mouths
Slobbering words like lava
Spilling them down the stems.
The mouths bleed words which drip
Into crawling slimy pools
And seep away like worms
Through the slit and cringing grass-blades.
Man-high is pausing stillness,
But the tree-leaves are whistling and cry-
ing
With pallid childish voices.
A screaming comes out of the distance,
An old dead agony wailing.
The anguish of frozen planets
Engulfed in a timeless whirling.
No ear can catch it and hold it,
It hangs beyond hearing, a sense
Of sound aching into the flesh,
Never there; never quite silent.
The sycamore stumps are completed
Into white and hovering snakes
Which glitter and gloom like silver
And wave in a pattern of circles
Perpetually turning and coiling.

The peacocks and unicorns,
 With the faces of men and women,
 Dance with the blue black dolphins
 Or bathe themselves in the fountains
 They tear off their feathers and skin,
 And stand up as golden figures
 With red mouths, and red ears, their
 bellies
 Are round and polished as brass,
 In the centre of each is a diamond
 They sing, and gambol, and roll
 And pelt one another with flowers,
 With mingolds and phlox
 And dish them into the fountain
 The Ghost Peak lies like a wound
 In a puckered purple sky,
 Sharp cut out of copper and crystal
 It throws a light on the garden
 And streaks it with terrible shadows
 Through the shadows, in the glare of the
 copper light,
 Goes Julius
 His breath scalds his lungs,
 His feet stick and cling upon the gravel,
 Behind him he hears the feet of the
 leaden figures
 Nearer, louder shattering his ears,
 Confusing his steps with the rhythm of
 theirs
 His tongue is a red hot ball in his mouth,
 His lungs labour as though under sand
 The peacocks and unicorns skip round
 him
 They form a ring and dance before him,
 Ogling him, thrusting upon him,
 Strewing the ground with the diamonds
 plucked from their bellies
 Before him lies the lake,
 Shuddering in sharp angles of copper and
 crystal
 He flogs his lungs, his feet
 He sees only the lake between the danc-
 ing unicorns and peacocks
 He hurls himself against the twined arms
 And breaks through them
 He leaps with a last pulse of effort,
 Into the lake
 Water rises and blinds him,
 Copper flaming water like a great wall
 crushes upon him.
 As he sinks — A clap! — loud and rever-
 berant as thunder
 Another clap! And a cleft wave rises to
 left and right
 Hangs a moment asunder,

And falls together with a noise of break-
 ing crystals
 The Ghost Peak explodes
 And tumbles in bloody atoms down the
 sky .

VII

Through quiet water, ruffled by the
 moon,
 Julius swims, toward the silent wharves
 Of the little village He hears the gentle
 grind
 Of rowboats against the wharf sides,
 Reaches one and clambering into it feels
 for the gunwale
 And then the bow and painter He pulls
 the painter,
 Hand over hand, until his fingers touch
 The seamed wood of the wharf Then,
 rising up,
 He steps ashore as the boat rocks away
 A striking clock reminds him of the
 hour
 It is five o'clock Already above the
 roofs
 The sky is tinted, but there are still some
 stars
 Like diamonds — Oh, damnable allusion!
 Like diamonds! — A slightly twisted smile
 Twitches his face And now he sees but
 one,
 Ravellous and small, immensely bright to
 keep
 Itself a sparkle in the coloured sky
 He sees it as the spectre of a death
 Which might have been, eyeing the resur-
 rection
 Which is Thank God! Now he can
 watch it fade
 Beneath the creeping daylight — just a
 star,
 Going out in the morning Stars are
 worlds,
 But what has he to do with other worlds
 Who knows so blunderingly of this? Well
 then
 What's to do in this world? There's
 Hildegard —
 With which beginning he finds it is the
 end,
 And other things superfluous Why re-
 turn?
 Why not start here directly where he
 stands?

He will go to town, and after Hildegarde
 (He feels no qualm at seeing Hildegarde,
 Some things are certain, Hildegarde is
 one),
 Call at his agent's and give him strict
 instructions
 To sell his house and all his furniture
 At once. He has a written inventory
 It is correct except for two lead figures,
 Small garden figurines of no great value,
 Fallen into the lake by accident

And much too heavy to think of salvag-
 ing
 This plausible fiction happily invented,
 The rising sun projected his sudden
 shadow
 Before him on an earth of gold Which
 nothing,
 He laughed and marched along the alley
 whistling
 The broom song from the "Sorcerer's Ap-
 prentice"

DRIED MARJORAM

Over the moor the wind blew chill,
 And cold it blew on the rounded hill
 With a gibbet starting up from its crest,
 The great arm pointing into the West
 Where something hung
 And clanked and swung

Churchyard carrion, caged four square
 To every wind that furrows the air,
 A poor unbured, unquiet thing,
 The weighted end of a constant swing
 It clanged and jangled
 But always dangled

Lonely travellers riding by
 Would check their horses suddenly
 As out of the wind arose a cry
 Hoarse as a horn in the weather eye
 Of sleet at sea
 Blown desperately

It would rise and fall, and the dissonance
 As it struck the shrill of the wind would
 lance
 The cold of ice drops down the spine
 And turn the blood to a clotted brine
 Then only the hum
 Of the wind would come

Never a sound but rasping heather
 For minute after minute together
 Till once again a wail, long drawn,
 Would slice the night as though it were
 sawn,
 Cleaving through
 The mist and dew

Such were the tales the riders told,
 Sitting snugly out of the cold

In a wayside inn, with just a nip
 Of cherry brandy from which to sip,
 While rafters rattled
 And gossips prattled

Rotted and blackened in its cage,
 Anchored in permanent harborage,
 Breeding its worms, with no decent clod
 To weave it an apron of grassy sod
 But this is no grief,
 The man was a thief

He stole a sheep from a farmer's fold
 He was hungry, he said, and very cold
 His mother was ill and needed food
 The judge took snuff, his attitude
 Was gently resigned
 He had not yet dined

"To be hanged by the neck until you are
 dead"

That was the verdict, the judge had said
 A sheep had died so why not a man
 The sheep had an owner, but no one can
 Claim to own
 A man full grown

Nobody's property, no one to care,
 But some one is sobbing over there
 "Most distressing, I declare,"
 Says the judge, "take the woman out on
 the stair,
 And give her a crown
 To buy a new gown"

A gown for a son, such a simple ex-
 change!
 But the clerk of the court finds it hard
 to arrange

This matter of sobbing, the fact is the
sheep
Was stolen for her, and the woman will
weep.

It is most unreasonable.
Indeed, well-nigh treasonable.

Slowly, slowly, his hands tied with rope,
The cart winds up the market slope.
Slowly, slowly, the knot is adjusted.
The tackle pulleys whine, they are rusted,
But free at a kick --
Run -- and hold with a click.

A mother's son, swung like a ham,
Bobbing over the heads of the jam.
A woman has fainted, give her air,
Drag her away for the people stare.
The hanging is done.
No more fun.

Nothing more but a jolting ride.
An ox-cart with a corpse inside,
Creaking through the shiny sheen
Of heather-stalks melted and bathed in
green
From a high-set moon.
The heather-bells croon.

Heather below, and moon overhead,
And iron bars clasping a man who is
dead.
Shadows of gorse-bushes under him bite
The shimmering moor like a spotted
blight.
The low wind chirrs
Over the furze.

Slowly, slowly, panting and weak,
Some one wanders and seems to seek,
Bursting her eyes in the green, vague
glare,
For an object she does not know quite
where.

Ah, what is that?
A wild moor cat?

It scratches and cries above her head,
But here is no tree, and overspread
With clouds and moon the waste recedes,
And the heather flows like bent sea-weeds
Pushed by an ebb
To an arching web.

Black and uncertain, it rises before
Her dim old eyes, and the glossy floor
At its feet is undulant and specked
With a rhythmic wavering, and flecked
By a reddish smudge
Which does not budge.

Woman, that bundle is your son,
This is the goal your steps have won.
Over the length of the jewelled moor
You have travelled at last to the high-
lung door
Of his airy grave,
Which does nothing but wave.

Dripping and dropping, his caged limbs
drain,
And the spangled ground has a sticky
stain.
She gave him this blood from her own
dull veins,
And hers still runs, but her body's pains
Turn back on her now,
And each is a blow.

Iron-shrouded, flapping the air,
Sepulchred without a prayer,
Denied the comfort of bell and book.
Her tortured eyes do nothing but look,
And from flower to flower
The moon sinks lower.

Silver-grey, lavender, lilac-blue,
East of the moor the sun breaks through;
Cracking a bank of orange mist,
It shoulders up with a ruddy twist,
And spears the spires
Of heath with its fires.

Then a lark shoots up like a popgun ball
And turns to a spark and a song, and all
The thrushes and sparrows twitter and fly,
And the dew on the heather and gorse is
dry.
But brutal and clear
The gibbet is here.

Slowly, slowly, worn and flagging,
With the grasshoppers jumping in front
of her dragging
feet, the old woman returns to the town.
But the seed of a thought has been deeply
sown
In her aching mind,
Where she holds it enshrined.

Nights of moon and nights of dark,
 Over the moor-path footsteps. Hark!
 It is the old woman whose son is rotting
 Above, on the gallows. That shadow
 blotting
 The Western sky
 Will be hers by-and-by.

Morning, and evening, and sun, and
 snow,
 Months of weather come and go.
 The flesh falls away from the withering
 bones,
 The bones grow loose and scatter like
 stones.
 For the gallows-tree
 Shakes windily.

Every night along the path
 Which her steps have beaten to a swath
 Where heather and bracken dare not
 spring,
 To the clack and grind of the gallows
 swing,
 The woman stumbles.
 The skeleton crumbles.

Bit by bit, on the ferns and furze,
 Drop the bones which now are hers.
 Bit by bit, she gathers them up
 And carries them home in an old cracked
 cup.
 But the head remains
 Although its brains

Nourish the harebells and mullein-stalks.
 Blow the wind high, the head still balks;
 It rolls like an ivory billiard-ball,
 But the bars are too close to let it fall.
 Still, God is just,
 And iron may rust.

November comes, this one after ten,
 And the stiff bush-branches grate on the
 fen,
 The gibbet jars to the sharp wind-strokes,
 And the frazzled iron snarls and croaks.
 It blows a gale
 With snow and hail.

Two days, three nights, the storm goes
 on,
 And the cage is tossed like a gonfalon
 Above a castle, crumpled and slit,
 And the frail joints are shattered apart
 and split.

The fissure gapes,
 And the skull escapes.

An ostrich-egg on a bed of fern,
 Restlessly rolled by the streams which
 churn
 The leaves, thrust under and forced into
 The roots and the mud which oozes
 through
 The empty pockets
 Of wide eye-sockets.

Two days, three nights, and the ferns are
 torn
 And scattered in heaps, and the bushes
 shorn,
 And the heather docked of its seeded
 bells.
 But the glittering skull heaves high and
 swells
 Above the dank square
 Where the ferns once were.

Hers at last, all, all of hers,
 And past her tears the red sun blurs,
 Bursting out of the sleeve of the storm.
 She brushes a busy, wriggling worm
 Away from the head
 Of her dearest dead.

The uprooted gibbet, all awry,
 Crooks behind her against the sky.
 Startled rabbits flee from her feet;
 The stems of the bracken smell ripe and
 sweet.
 She pays no heed,
 But quickens her speed.

In the quiet evening, the church-bell tolls;
 Fishermen wind up their fishing-poles;
 Sheep-bells clink in farmstead closes;
 A cat in a kitchen window dozes;
 And doors are white
 With candlelight.

In the old woman's house there is much
 to do.
 Her windows are shuttered, no gleam
 comes through,
 But inside, the lamp-shine strikes on a
 tub;
 She washes, it seems, and her old hands
 rub
 And polish with care
 The thing that is there.

Gently, gently, sorting and sifting,
 With a little psalm-tune shakily drifting
 Across her lips, she works and watches,
 Stealing moments in sundry snatches
 To note the tick-tock
 Of the hanging clock.

Decently, reverently, all displayed
 Upon a cloth, the bones are laid.
 Oh, the loving, lingering touch
 Tenderly pausing on such and such!
 A cuckoo flings
 From the clock, and sings.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Eight times over.
 Wrap them up in a linen cover.
 Take the spade and snuff the lamp.
 Put on a cloak for the night is damp.
 The door creaks wide,
 She steps outside.

All tottering, solemn, eager, slow,
 She crawls along. The moon is low
 And creeps beside her through the hedge,
 Rising at last to peer over the edge
 Of the churchyard wall
 And brighten her shawl.

The flagstone path taps back to her tread.
 She stops to listen, and whispers spread
 All round her, hissing from trees and
 graves.

Before her is movement; something
 waves.

But she passes on,
 The movement is gone.

Blind in the moon the windows shine,
 Colourless, glinting, line and line,
 The leaded panes are facets and squares
 Of dazzle, arched in carven pairs.
 Ivy rustles.
 A yew-tree jostles.

The corner last on the farthest side
 Where the church, foreshortened, is
 heavy-eyed,
 For only the chancel lancets pierce
 The belched millions, designed in tierce,
 Whence the sun comes through
 Ruby and blue.

This corner is strangled in overgrowth;
 Dock-leaves waver like elephants, loath
 To move, but willing to flap their ears,

And huge stone blocks like unshaped
 biers

Are sprawled among
 Clumps of adder's-tongue.

A bat swoops down and flitters away;
 An owl whimpers like a child astray;
 The slanting grave-stones, all askew,
 Cock themselves obscenely, two and two.
 She stoops and pushes
 Between the bushes.

She lays her bundle on a stone.
 Her bleeding hands are cut to the bone
 And torn by the spines of thorn and brier.
 Her shoulders ache. Her spade in the
 mire
 Sucks and slimes
 These many times.

Slowly she clears an open space,
 Screened behind hollies, where wild vines
 lace
 Their tendrils in angles and fractured
 turns.
 But water is flooding the stems of the
 ferns.

Alas for the dead
 Who lie in this bed!

But hanged men have no business where
 The ground has been hallowed by chant
 and prayer.

Even to lie in the putrid seeping
 Of consecrate mud is to be in God's keep-
 ing.

And He will forget
 His judgment debt.

Poor lone soul, all palsied and dim,
 As she lifts the bones, she quavers a
 hymn.

Then, as for years she laid him to sleep
 In his crib, she sets the bundle deep
 In the watery hole,
 And prays for his soul.

"Rest, lad, now, surely God hears,
 He has granted me this for my many
 tears.

Sleep, my Darling, for you are come
 Home at last to stay at home."

But the old voice stops,
 And something drops.

They found her dead on a sunny noon,
Clasping the ground, and overstrewn
With decent leaves which had dropped
a shroud
All about her. The parson allowed
Custom to waive
In making her grave.

Even the sexton said no word
When something under his shovel stirred,
And the parson read the burial prayer.
He seemed rather husky, but then the air
Was bitter cold.
There was frost on the mold.

BEFORE THE STORM

THE LEGEND OF PETER RUGG

I

Over the hill snakes the dusty road, creeping up, and up, in a smother of sandy gravel, heaving the load of itself up against the horizon; a couple of yards of level, then a leap down between powdered barberry bushes; a narrow white line shot like a bolt between bushes and stone walls. It is appallingly still. Not a rustle of the white barberry-leaves, not a single moving stalk of Queen Anne's lace in the field over the wall. The sunshine lies like a flat, hot weight on the hill, a moment ago there were locusts grating in the branches, but not now. The ground is still, and hot to touch; the trees are still, with a hushing of innumerable leaves; the sky is still; but in the Southwest, great thunder-heads push up behind the mountain. A hushing of leaves, and a pushing of big, white clouds, up — up — puffing into wide silver balloons, gathering back into pigeon-grey pleats, up — up — into the hot yellow sky.

There is a shade over the sun, it is fading from yellow to white, from white to grey. Away down the hill is a tight, narrow wedge of wind, it cuts sharply over a field of barley; it is edged, and hard, and single. Another wind-wedge, with looser, vaguer edges. A mist swirls over the shoulder of Black Top, thickens, clouds the mountain.

A barberry-leaf jerks, and settles; two barberry-leaves quirk themselves upright, and fall back; from over the hill there is a quick skirling of crisp leaves — nearer. The trees begin to whisper, and the snaky road hurls its dust into the air and plunges down the hill into the blue-black

wind. All the leaves are blowing now, shivering, pulling, throwing themselves frantically lither and thither; they are not green any more, but blue and purple, and they play over the rolling thunder like flutes and mandolins over double basses.

Something races along the road. Sharp whip-cracks staccato upon the double basses and flutes. Who lashes a poor brute up a hill like that? On the two-yard level, something passes in a smear of yellow wheels and bright steel shoes. Who goes there? "Boston! Boston! . . ." But the stones of the down grade are already clattering and rolling as the horse goes over them. A spatter of rain slaps the barberry-leaves; patter — patter — rain, and a grieving, tearing wind. A flare of lightning! There is no one on the road. A long peal of thunder, and then beating rain.

II

"Lucindy-Ann, you run upstairs this minit and shut them guest-room winders, ther's a awful storm a-comin'."

Lucindy-Ann tears up the narrow stair, but pauses at the guest-room window to see the black water of the bay wrinkle and flow, and all the fishing-boats scud to their moorings. A flicker of lightning quicksivers the window-panes. A crash of thunder sets them clapping in their frames.

"Somebody's caught," giggles Lucindy-Ann. "Well, ef that ain't a queer team!"

Along the shore road comes a high carriage with yellow wheels. It comes so fast it reels from side to side, swaying in

a dreadful way. Standing up in it, lashing the white horse, is a man, in a long laced coat and cocked hat. "Did you ever see a figure of fun to beat that?" Lucindy-Ann leans from the window, and the lightning spots her out against the black room behind like a painted saint on a dark altar. *Lucindy-Ann does not falter.* There is a child beside the man, clinging and shaking. The horse is making for the house.

"You come right in," shouts Lucindy-Ann. "Drive around to the kitchen door," but before she can say more, the man has pulled his sweating horse up under the window.

"Which is the way to Boston?" he calls. And his voice quavers, and quivers, and falls. A clap of thunder, the child shrieks, the old apple-tree by the window creaks. The man looks up, and his clothes are torn—worn, draggled, caked with mud. His face is white, and his eyes a-stare, the lightning strikes him out to a glare: he, and the child, and the yellow-wheeled chaise, against a background of blue-black haze. The waves slap on the sandy shore, the apple-tree taps on the entry door. "Which way to Boston?" the cracked voice wails. "Boston—Boston . . ." the echo trails away through tossing trees. In the bay, the fishing-boats heel to the breeze.

A roll of thunder jags and cracks over the house roof. Rain-drops—clashing on a row of milk-pans set out to air.

"Boston, Sir, why you must be mad, you're twelve miles from Providence, and headed fair that way." A sharp whip cut, a snorting horse, a scrape and whirl of the yellow wheels, round spins the chaise, and dashes for the gate.

"An' ef he ain't took the wrong turn agin!" gasps Lucindy-Ann, as she draws her head in. The milk-cans rattle, as the thunder bursts and tears out of the sky. Away down the road comes the clinking clatter of fast wheels, lessening the distance to Providence.

"I don't s'pose it matters," says Lucindy-Ann, but she scuttles down the stairway as fast as she can.

III

The sky is lowering and black, a strange blue-blackness, which makes red houses pink, and green leaves purple. Over the blowing purple trees, the sky is an iron-blue, split with forks of straw-yellow. The thunder breaks out of the sky with a crash, and rumbles away in a long, hoarse drag of sound. The river is the blue of Concord grapes, with steel points and oblongs, down the bridge; up stream, it is pale and even, a solid line of unpolished zinc.

Tlop—Tlop—Tlop—Tlop! Beyond the willows, the road bends; someone is coming down it at a tremendous speed. Indeed he is in a hurry, this someone. You can hear him lashing his horse. A flashing up of willows and road on a lightning jab. A high yellow-wheeled gig, or chair, fashion of a century ago. A man in a cocked hat, a child in a snood! What the devil gets into the blood when thunder is rumbling? Have a care, man, that horse is stumbling. Down on his knees, by Gravy! No, up again. Bear him on the rein. Hil! Do you hear? A queer swifling and sighing in the air. The crying of a desolate child. A quivering flare of lightning sparkling in the whirling spokes of turning wheels. Tlop! Tlop! on the wooden planks of the bridge. No thanks to you you're not over the edge. Lord, what a curve! He went round on one wheel. Do you hear anything? No, feel rather. Drifting over the grape-blue river, seeping through the willow-trees' quiver, is a faint, hoarse calling of "Boston—Boston—Will no one show me the way to Boston?" Poor Devil, he can't have left it above an hour. Listen to the bridge drumming to the shower. And the water all peppered with little white rounds, it's funny how a storm plays the mischief with sounds. Sights, too, sometimes. Cocked hat, indeed! I must have been dreaming.

IV

Guinea-gold, the State House dome, standing out against a wall of indigo cloud. Boldly thrust out in high relief,

with its white façade, and its wide, terraced esplanade. It spurns the Common at its feet, treading on it as on a mat, cooling itself with the air from its fanning trees. Guinea-gold lightning glitters through the indigo-blue cloud, a loud muffled booming of thunder, then the rain, pin-pointing down on the stretched silk of umbrellas, clipping like hard white beams on glass awnings, double-streaming over the two edges of sidewalk clocks. Electric car gongs knock sharp warnings into the slipping crowd. A policeman humps himself into his rubber coat and springs to catch the head of a careering horse.

"Stop beatin' him, ye Fool. Didn't ye see me raised hand? Whoa! Stand still, ye beast. You advertisin' fellers think the least ye do is to own the city. I've a mind to run ye in. Fool-bumpin' along like that. What you pushin' anyway, break-fast food or automobiles? He was a clever guy rigged ye out, but I guess ye're about due for a new set of glad rags, judgin' by them ye got on. Here, Kiddie, don't cry, ye'll soon be home now, snug and dry. Listen to that thunder. Some storm! No wonder ye're scared; it's fierce. What's that? Mrs. Peter Rugg? Middle Street? See her, I ain't a direct'ry, ye'd better inquire at the post-office. Tell your breakfast food to put its name on ye next time."

There is a hissing of sparks as the steel shoes strike the wet asphalt. A clattering of iron tires on the metal roadway, drowned by a thunder peal. Wires and wires of linked rain, hatching over the disappearing yellow wheels.

The policeman rubs a wet, red ear. "That's a queer thing," he mutters, "very queer. I thought he asked me the way to Boston, just as he was drivin' off."

V

The yellow-wheeled chaise with the cocked-hatted man takes all of New England into its span. Logging-men, drifting down the Kennebec on floating rafts, see a moving speck of sulphur dust along the bank, an old-fashioned gig, drawn by a lank white horse, driving furiously before

the storm. A moment later, a thunder-bolt gashes across the sky, they can feel the raft jolt. Then the river swirls into lumpy waves and the logging men jump to their poles and staves.

An automobile, struggling up Jacob's Ladder on the way to Lenox in the teeth of a thunder-shower, sees glowering ahead on the down stretch, a wretched one-horse rig, which, in the uncertain light, seems as big as a locomotive. The driver switches on his klaxon and takes the down slope. But he might be a loping broncho, for all the gain he makes on the one-horse team. His klaxon screeches and echoes among the hills. Is it a dream that over its din, a thin voice reaches his ear? "Boston — Boston . . ." he seems to hear. "I left Menotomy a long time ago. Oh, when shall I get to Boston!"

Gloucester fishermen, moored to a wharf, hear a wheezy, coughing voice calling, pleading, in the middle of the night. It is a crazy wight, in a two-wheeled buggy of a pattern long gone by, driving a great white horse with a savage eye. The horse stamps on the thin boards of the wharf and champs his bit. There's a slip of a girl, too, who does nothing but cry. Rigging slaps and spars creak, for a gale is rising and the stars are hidden. The fishermen hear again the wail, "Tell me how to get to Boston." "Well, not that way, Idiot, you're going straight into the Atlantic Ocean." There is a terrible commotion on the wharf, the horse almost beats it through with his hoofs. Then, in the white gleam of a lightning spear, the chaise is seen rocking, shaking, making for the road above and turning toward Ipswich.

Through narrow wood-tracks where hermit-thrushes pair, staggers the yellow one-horse chair, just ahead of a lightning flare. Along elm-shaded streets of little towns, the high wheels roll, and leaves blow down on the man's cocked hat and the little girl's snood, and a moment later comes a flood of bright, white rain, and thunder so loud it stops the blood.

From Kittery Point down to Cape Cod, trundle the high, turning wheels;

they rattle at the Canadian line; they shine in the last saffron glitter of an extinguishing sun by the ferry over Lake Champlain; they are seen again as the moon dips into an inky cloud passing the Stadium in East Cambridge, the driver bowed over the dasher and plying his whip; they flash beside graveyards, and thunder lashes the graveyard trees. Always the chaise flees before the approach-

ing storm. And always, down the breeze, blowing backwards through the bending trees, comes the despairing wail — "Boston! — For the love of God, put me on the road to Boston!" Then the gale grows louder, lightning spurts and dazzles, and steel-white rain falls heavily out of the sky. A great clap of thunder, and purple-black darkness blinding the earth.

FOUR SIDES TO A HOUSE

Peter, Peter, along the ground,
Is it wind I hear, or your shoes' sound?
Peter, Peter, across the air,
Do dead leaves fall, or is it your hair?
Peter, Peter, North and South,
They have stopped your mouth
With water, Peter.

The long road runs, and the long road runs,
Who comes over the long road, Peter?
Who knocks at the door in the cold twilight,
And begs a heap of straw for the night,
And a bit of a sup, and a bit of a bite —
Do you know the face, Peter?

He lays him down on the floor and sleeps.
Must you wind the clock, Peter?
It will strike and strike the dark night through.

He will sleep past one, he will sleep past two,
But when it strikes three what will he do?
He will rise and kill you, Peter.

He will open the door to one without.
Do you hear that voice, Peter?
Two men prying and poking about,
Is it here, is it there, is it in, is it out?
Cover his staring eyes with a clout.
But you're dead, dead, Peter.

They have ripped up the boards, they have pried up the stones,
They have found your gold, dead Peter.
Ripe, red coins to itch a thief's hand.
But you drip ripe red on the floor's white sand,

You burn their eyes like a firebrand,
They must quench you, Peter.

It is dark in the North, it is dark in the South,
The wind blows your white hair, Peter.
One at your feet and one at your head.
A soft bed, a smooth bed,
Scarcely a splash, you sink like lead.
Sweet water in your well, Peter.

Along the road and along the road,
The next house, Peter.
Four-square to the bright and the shade of the moon.
The North winds shuffle, the South winds croon,
Water with white hair over-strewn.
The door, the door, Peter!
Water seeps under the door.

They have risen up in the morning grey.
What will they give to Peter?
The sorrel horse with the tail of gold,
Fastest pacer ever was foaled.
Shoot him, skin him, blanch his bones,
Nail up his skull with a silver nail
Over the door, it will not fail.
No ghostly thing can ever prevail
Against a horse's skull, Peter.

Over the lilacs, gazing down,
Is a window, Peter.
The North winds call, and the South winds cry.
Silver white hair in a bitter blowing,
Eel-green water washing by.
A red mouth floating and flowing.
Do you come, Peter?

They rose as the last star sank and set.

One more for Peter.

'They slew the black mare at the flush of
the sun,

And nailed her skull to the window-stone.

In the light of the moon how white it
shone —

And your breathing mouth, Peter!

Around the house, and around the house,

With a wind that is North, and a wind
that is South,

Peter, Peter.

Mud and ooze and a dead man's wrist

Wrenching the shutters apart, like mist

The mud and the ooze and the dead
man twist.

They are praying, Peter.

Three in stable a week ago.

'This is the last, Peter.

'My strawberry roan in the morning
clear,

Lady heart and attentive ear,

Foot like a kitten, nose like a deer,

But the fear! The fear!"

'Three skulls, Peter.

The sun goes down, and the night draws
in.

Toward the hills, Peter.

What lies so stiff on the bill-room floor,

When the gusty wind claps to the door?

They have paid three horses and two
men more.

Gather your gold, Peter.

Softly, softly, along the ground

Lest your shoes sound.

Gently, gently, across the air

Lest it stream, your hair.

North and South

For your aching mouth.

But the moon is old, Peter,

And death is long, and the well is deep.

Can you sleep, sleep, Peter?

FIR-FLOWER TABLETS

PREFACE

LET ME STATE at the outset that I know no Chinese. My duty in Mrs. Ayscough's and my joint collaboration has been to turn her literal translations into poems as near to the spirit of the originals as it was in my power to do. It has been a long and arduous task, but one which has amply repaid every hour spent upon it. To be suddenly introduced to a new and magnificent literature, not through the medium of the usual more or less accurate translation, but directly, as one might burrow it out for one's self with the aid of a dictionary, is an exciting and inspiring thing. The method we adopted made this possible, as I shall attempt to show. The study of Chinese is so difficult that it is a life-work in itself; so is the study of poetry. A sinologue has no time to learn how to write poetry; a poet has no time to learn how to read Chinese. Since neither of us pretended to any knowledge of the other's craft, our association has been a continually augmenting pleasure.

I was lucky indeed to approach Chinese poetry through such a medium. The translations I had previously read had given me nothing. Mrs. Ayscough has been to me the pathway to a new world. No one could be a more sympathetic go-between for a poet and his translator, and Mrs. Ayscough was well-fitted for her task. She was born in Shanghai. Her father, who was engaged in business there, was a Canadian and her mother an American. She lived in China until she was eleven, when her parents returned to America in order that their children might finish their education in this country. It was then that I met her, so that our friendship is no new thing, but has persisted, in spite of distance, for more than thirty years, to ripen in the end into a partnership which is its culmination. Returning to China in her early twenties, she became engaged to an

Englishman connected with a large British importing house in Shanghai, and on her marriage, which took place almost immediately, went back to China, where she has lived ever since. A diligent student of Chinese life and manners, she soon took up the difficult study of literary Chinese, and also accepted the position of honorary librarian of the library of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Of late years, she has delivered a number of lectures on Chinese subjects in China, Japan, America, and Canada, and has also found time to write various pamphlets on Chinese literature and customs.

In the Autumn of 1917, Mrs. Ayscough arrived in America on one of her periodic visits to this country. She brought with her a large collection of Chinese paintings for exhibition, and among these paintings were a number of examples of the "Written Pictures." Of these, she had made some rough translation which she intended to use to illustrate her lectures. She brought them to me with a request that I put them into poetic shape. I was fascinated by the poems, and, as we talked them over, we realized that here was a field in which we should like to work. When she returned to China, it was agreed that we should make a volume of translations from the classic Chinese writers. Such translations were in the line of her usual work, and I was anxious to read the Chinese poets as nearly in the original as it was possible for me to do. At first, we hardly considered publication. Mrs. Ayscough lives in Shanghai and I in Boston, and the war-time mails were anything but expeditious, but an enthusiastic publisher kept constantly before us our ultimate, if remote, goal. Four years have passed, and after many unavoidable delays the book is finished. We have not done it all by correspondence. Mrs. Ayscough

has come back to America several times during its preparation; but, whether together or apart, the plan on which we have worked has always been the same.

Very early in our studies, we realized that the component parts of the Chinese written character counted for more in the composition of poetry than has generally been recognized; that the poet chose one character rather than another which meant practically the same thing, because of the descriptive allusion in the makeup of that particular character; that the poem was enriched precisely through this undercurrent of meaning in the structure of its characters. But not always — and here was the difficulty. Usually the character must be taken merely as the word it had been created to mean. It was a nice distinction, when to allow one's self the use of these character undercurrents, and when to leave them out of count entirely. But I would not have my readers suppose that I have changed or exaggerated the Chinese text. Such has not been the case. The analysis of characters has been employed very rarely, and only when the text seemed to lean on the allusion for an added vividness or zest. In only one case in the book have I permitted myself to use an adjective not inherent in the character with which I was dealing — and, in that case, the connotation was in the word itself, being descriptive of an architectural structure for which we have no equivalent — except in the "Written Pictures," where, as Mrs. Ayscough has stated in her Introduction, we allowed ourselves a somewhat freer treatment.

It has been necessary, of course, to acquire some knowledge of the laws of Chinese versification. But, equally of course, these rules could only serve to bring me into closer relations with the poems and the technical limits of the various forms. It was totally impossible to follow either the rhythms or the rhyme-schemes of the originals. All that could be done was to let the English words fall into their natural rhythm and not attempt to handicap the exact word by in-

troducing rhyme at all. This is the method I followed in my translations of French poems in my book, "Six French Poets." I hold that it is more important to reproduce the perfume of a poem than its metrical form, and no translation can possibly reproduce both.

Our plan of procedure was as follows: Mrs. Ayscough would first write out the poem in Chinese. Not in the Chinese characters, of course, but in transliteration. Opposite every word she put the various meanings of it which accorded with its place in the text, since I could not use a Chinese dictionary. She also gave the analyses of whatever characters seemed to her to require it. The lines were carefully indicated, and to these lines I have, as a rule, strictly adhered; the lines of the translations usually corresponding, therefore, with the lines of the originals. In the few poems in which the ordering of the lines has been changed, this has been done solely in the interest of cadence.

I had, in fact, four different means of approach to a poem. The Chinese text, for rhyme-scheme and rhythm; the dictionary meanings of the words; the analyses of characters; and, for the fourth, a careful paraphrase by Mrs. Ayscough, to which she added copious notes to acquaint me with all the allusions, historical, mythological, geographical, and technical, that she deemed it necessary for me to know. Having done what I could with these materials, I sent the result to her, when she and her Chinese teacher carefully compared it with the original, and it was returned to me, either passed or commented upon, as the case might be. Some poems crossed continent and ocean many times in their course toward completion; others, more fortunate, satisfied at once. On Mrs. Ayscough's return to America this year, all the poems were submitted to a further meticulous scrutiny, and I can only say that they are as near the originals as we could make them, and I hope they may give one quarter of the pleasure to our readers that they have to us in preparing them.

INTRODUCTION

THERE HAS probably never been a people in whose life poetry has played such a large part as it has done, and does, among the Chinese. The unbroken continuity of their history, throughout the whole of which records have been carefully kept, has resulted in the accumulation of a vast amount of material; and this material, literary as well as historical, remains available to-day for any one who wishes to study that branch of art which is the most faithful index to the thoughts and feelings of the "black-haired race," which, besides, constitutes one of the finest literatures produced by any race the world has known.

To the confusion of the foreigner, however, Chinese poetry is so made up of suggestion and allusion that, without a knowledge of the backgrounds (I use the plural advisedly) from which it sprang, much of its meaning and not a little of its beauty is necessarily lost. Mr. Arthur Waley, in the preface to his "A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems," says: "Classical allusion, always the vice of Chinese poetry, finally destroyed it altogether." Granting the unhappy truth of this statement, the poetry of China is nevertheless so human and appealing as to speak with great force even to us who live under such totally different conditions; it seems worth while, therefore, to acquire a minimum of knowledge in regard to it and so increase the enjoyment to be derived from it. In the present collection, I have purposely included only those poems in which this national vice is less in evidence; and this was not a difficult task. There is such an enormous body of Chinese poetry that the difficulty has been, not what to take, but what to leave out. I have been guided somewhat by existing translations, not wishing to duplicate what has already been adequately done, when so much still remains untouched. Not that all these poems appear in English for the first time, but many of them do; and except for Mr. Waley's admirable work, English render-

ings have usually failed to convey the flavour of the originals.

Chinese scholars rank their principal poets in the following order: Tu Fu, Li T'ai-po, and Po Chü-i. Realizing that, naturally, in any literature, it is the great poets which another nation wishes to read, I have purposely kept chiefly to them, and among them to Li T'ai-po, since his poems are of a universal lyricism. Also, Mr. Waley has devoted his energies largely to Po Chü-i. Tu Fu is very difficult to translate, and probably for that reason his work is seldom given in English collections of Chinese poems. Some of his simpler poems are included here, however. A small section of the book is devoted to what the Chinese call "written-on-the-wall-pictures." I shall come back to these later.

The great stumbling-block which confronts the translator at the outset is that the words he would naturally use often bring before the mind of the Occidental reader an entirely different scene to that actually described by the Oriental poet. The topography, the architecture, the fauna and flora, to say nothing of the social customs, are all alien to such a reader's own surroundings and cannot easily be visualized by him. Let me illustrate with a modern poem, for it is a curious fact that there has lately sprung up in America and England a type of poetry which is so closely allied to the Chinese in method and intention as to be very striking. This is the more remarkable since, at the time of its first appearance, there were practically no translations of Chinese poems which gave, except in a remote degree, the feeling of the originals. So exact, in fact, is this attitude toward the art of poetry among the particular group of poets to whom I have reference and the Chinese masters, that I have an almost perfect illustration of the complications of rendering which a translator runs up against by imagining this little poem of Miss Lowell's being suddenly presented to a Chinese scholar

in his grass hut among the Seven Peaks:

NOSTALGIA

BY AMY LOWELL

"Through pleasures and palaces" —
Through hotels, and Pullman cars, and steamships . . .

*Pink and white camellias
floating in a crystal bowl,
The sharp smell of firewood,
The scrape and rustle of a dog stretching himself
on a hardwood floor,
And your voice, reading -- reading --
to the slow ticking of an old brass clock . . .*

*"Tickets, please!"
And I watch the man in front of me
Fumbling in fourteen pockets,
While the conductor balances his ticket-punch
Between his fingers.*

As we read this poem, instantly pictures of American travel start before our eyes: rushing trains with plush-covered seats, Negro porters in dusty-grey suits, weary ticket-collectors; or marble-floored hotel entrances, clanging elevator doors, and hurrying bell-boys, also the vivid suggestion of a beautiful American house. But our scholar would see none of this. To him, a journey is undertaken, according to the part of the country in which he must travel, either in a boat, the types of which are infinitely varied, from the large, slow-going travelling barge capable of carrying many passengers, to the swifter, smaller craft which hold only two or three people; in one of the several kinds of carriages; in a wheelbarrow, a sedan chair, a mule litter, or on the back of an animal — horse, mule, or donkey, as the case may be. Again, there is no English-speaking person to whom "Home, Sweet Home" is not familiar; in a mental flash, we conclude the stanza suggested by the first line, and know, even without the title, that the subject of the poem is homesickness. Our scholar, naturally, knows nothing of the kind; the reference is no reference to him. He is completely at sea, with no clue as to the emotion the poem is intended to convey, and no understanding of the conditions it portrays. Poem after poem in Chinese is as full of the intimate detail of daily life, as dependent upon common literary ex-

perience, as this. There is an old Chinese song called "The Snapped Willow." It, too, refers to homesickness and allusions to it are very frequent, but how can an Occidental guess at their meaning unless he has been told? In this Introduction, therefore, I have endeavoured to give as much of the background of this Chinese poetry as seems to me important, and, since introductions are made to be skipped, it need detain no one to whom the facts are already known.

The vast country of China, extending from the plains of Mongolia on the North to the Gulf of Tonquin on the South, a distance of somewhat over eighteen hundred miles, and from the mountains of Tibet on the West to the Yellow Sea on the East, another stretch of about thirteen hundred miles, comprises within its "Eighteen Provinces" practically every climate and condition under which human beings can exist with comfort. A glance at the map will show the approximate positions of the ancient States which form the poetic background of China, and it will be noticed that, with the exception of Yüeh, they all abut either on the Huang Ho, better known as the Yellow River, or on the Yangtze Kiang. These two great rivers form the main arteries of China, and to them is largely due the character of the people and the type of their mythology.

The Yellow River, which in the old mythology was said to have its source in the Milky Way (in the native idiom, "Cloudy" or "Silver River"), really rises in the K'un Lun Mountains of Central Asia; from thence its course lies through the country supposed to have been the cradle of the Chinese race. It is constantly referred to in poetry, as is also its one considerable tributary, the Wei River, or "Wei Water," its literal name. The Yellow River is not navigable for important craft, and running as it does through sandy loess constantly changes its course with the most disastrous consequences.

The Yangtze Kiang, "Son of the Sea," often referred to as the "Great River," is very different in character. Its source lies among the mountains of the Tibetan border, where it is known as the "River of Golden Sand." After flowing due

South for several hundred miles, it turns abruptly to the North and East, and, forcing its way through the immense wall of mountain which confronts it, "rushes with incredible speed" to the far-off Eastern Sea, forming in its course the Yangtze Gorges, of which the most famous are the San Hsia, or "Three Chasms." To these, the poets never tire of alluding, for, to quote Li T'ai-po, the cliffs rise to such a height that they seem to "press Green Heaven." The water is low during the Winter months, leaving many treacherous rocks and shoals uncovered, but rises to a seething flood during the Summer, when the Tibetan snows are melting. The river is then doubly dangerous, as even great pinnacles of rock are concealed by the whirling rapids. Near this point, the Serpent River, so-called from its tortuous configuration, winds its way through deep ravines and joins the main stream. As may be imagined, navigation on these stretches of the river is extremely perilous, and an ascent of the Upper Yangtze takes several months to perform since the boats must be hauled over the numerous rapids by men, called professionally "trackers," whose work is so strenuous that they are bent nearly double as they crawl along the tow-paths made against the cliffs. In spite of the precipitous nature of the banks, many towns and villages are built upon them and rise tier on tier up the mountain sides. Having run about two-thirds of its course and reached the modern city of Hankow, the Great River changes its mood and continues on its way, immense and placid, forming the chief means of communication between the sea and Central China. The remarkably fertile country on either side is intersected by water-ways, natural and artificial, used instead of roads, which latter do not exist in the Yangtze Valley, their place being taken by paths, some of which are paved with stone and wide enough to accommodate two or three people abreast.

As travel has always been very popular, every conceivable form of water-borne craft has sprung up, and these the poets constantly used as they went from the capital to take up their official posts, or

from the house of one patron to another, the ancient custom being for the rich to entertain and support men of letters with whom they "drank wine and recited verses," the pastime most dear to their hearts. The innumerable poems of farewell found among the works of all Chinese poets were usually written as parting gifts from the authors to their hosts.

As it nears the sea, the river makes a great sweep round Nanking and flows through what was once the State of Wu, now Kiangsu. This and the neighbouring States of Yüeh and Ch'u (the modern Chékiang and parts of Hunan, Kweichow, and Kiangsi) is the country painted in such lovely, peaceful pictures by Li T'ai-po and his brother poets. The climate being mild, the willows which grow on the banks of the rivers and canals are seldom bare and begin to show the faint colour of Spring by the middle of January; and, before many days, the soft bud-sheaths, called by the Chinese "willow-snow," lie thick on the surface of the water. Plum-trees flower even while the rare snow-falls turn the ground white, and soon after the New Year, the moment when, according to the Chinese calendar, Spring "opens," the fields are pink with peach-bloom, and gold with rape-blossom, while the air is sweetly scented by the flowers of the beans sown the Autumn before. Walls and fences are unknown, only low ridges divide the various properties, and the little houses of the farmers are built closely together in groups, as a rule to the South of a bamboo copse which acts as a screen against the Northeast winds prevailing during the Winter; the aspect of the rich plain, which produces three crops a year, is therefore that of an immense garden, and the low, grey houses, with their heavy roofs, melt into the picture as do the blue-coated people who live in them. Life is very intimate and communistic, and the affairs of every one in the village are known to every one else. The silk industry being most important, mulberry-trees are grown in great numbers to provide the silk-worms with the leaves upon which they subsist, and are kept closely pollarded in order that they may produce as much foliage as possible.

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While the conductor balances his ticket-punch
Between his fingers.*

As we read this poem, instantly pictures of American travel start before our eyes: rushing trains with plush-covered seats, Negro porters in dusty-grey suits, weary ticket-collectors; or marble-floored hotel entrances, clanging elevator doors, and hurrying bell-boys, also the vivid suggestion of a beautiful American house. But our scholar would see none of this. To him, a journey is undertaken, according to the part of the country in which he must travel, either in a boat, the types of which are infinitely varied, from the large, slow-going travelling barge capable of carrying many passengers, to the swifter, smaller craft which hold only two or three people; in one of the several kinds of carriages; in a wheelbarrow, a sedan chair, a mule litter, or on the back of an animal — horse, mule, or donkey, as the case may be. Again, there is no English-speaking person to whom "Home, Sweet Home" is not familiar; in a mental flash, we conclude the stanza suggested by the first line, and know, even without the title, that the subject of the poem is homesickness. Our scholar, naturally, knows nothing of the kind; the reference is no reference to him. He is completely at sea, with no clue as to the emotion the poem is intended to convey, and no understanding of the conditions it portrays. Poem after poem in Chinese is as full of the intimate detail of daily life, as dependent upon common literary ex-

perience, as this. There is an old Chinese song called "The Snapped Willow." It, too, refers to homesickness and allusion to it are very frequent, but how can an Occidental guess at their meaning unless he has been told? In this Introduction, therefore, I have endeavoured to give as much of the background of this Chinese poetry as seems to me important, and, since introductions are made to be skipped, it need detain no one to whom the facts are already known.

The vast country of China, extending from the plains of Mongolia on the North to the Gulf of Tonquin on the South, a distance of somewhat over eighteen hundred miles, and from the mountains of Tibet on the West to the Yellow Sea on the East, another stretch of about thirteen hundred miles, comprises within its "Eighteen Provinces" practically every climate and condition under which human beings can exist with comfort. A glance at the map will show the approximate positions of the ancient States which form the poetic background of China, and it will be noticed that, with the exception of Yüeh, they all abut either on the Huang Ho, better known as the Yellow River, or on the Yangtze Kiang. These two great rivers form the main arteries of China, and to them is largely due the character of the people and the type of their mythology.

The Yellow River, which in the old mythology was said to have its source in the Milky Way (in the native idiom, "Cloudy" or "Silver River"), really rises in the K'un Lun Mountains of Central Asia; from thence its course lies through the country supposed to have been the cradle of the Chinese race. It is constantly referred to in poetry, as is also its one considerable tributary, the Wei River, or "Wei Water," its literal name. The Yellow River is not navigable for important craft, and running as it does through sandy loess constantly changes its course with the most disastrous consequences.

The Yangtze Kiang, "Son of the Sea," often referred to as the "Great River," is very different in character. Its source lies among the mountains of the Tibetan border, where it is known as the "River of Golden Sand." After flowing due

South for several hundred miles, it turns abruptly to the North and East, and, forcing its way through the immense wall of mountain which confronts it, "rushes with incredible speed" to the far-off Eastern Sea, forming in its course the Yangtze Gorges, of which the most famous are the San Hsia, or "Three Chasms." To these, the poets never tire of alluding, for, to quote Li T'ai-po, the cliffs rise to such a height that they seem to "press Green Heaven." The water is low during the Winter months, leaving many treacherous rocks and shoals uncovered, but rises to a seething flood during the Summer, when the Tibetan snows are melting. The river is then doubly dangerous, as even great pinnacles of rock are concealed by the whirling rapids. Near this point, the Serpent River, so-called from its tortuous configuration, winds its way through deep ravines and joins the main stream. As may be imagined, navigation on these stretches of the river is extremely perilous, and an ascent of the Upper Yangtze takes several months to perform since the boats must be hauled over the numerous rapids by men, called professionally "trackers," whose work is so strenuous that they are bent nearly double as they crawl along the tow-paths made against the cliffs. In spite of the precipitous nature of the banks, many towns and villages are built upon them and rise tier on tier up the mountain sides. Having run about two-thirds of its course and reached the modern city of Hankow, the Great River changes its mood and continues on its way, immense and placid, forming the chief means of communication between the sea and Central China. The remarkably fertile country on either side is intersected by water-ways, natural and artificial, used instead of roads, which latter do not exist in the Yangtze Valley, their place being taken by paths, some of which are paved with stone and wide enough to accommodate two or three people abreast.

As travel has always been very popular, every conceivable form of water-borne craft has sprung up, and these the poets constantly used as they went from the capital to take up their official posts, or

from the house of one patron to another, the ancient custom being for the rich to entertain and support men of letters with whom they "drank wine and recited verses," the pastime most dear to their hearts. The innumerable poems of farewell found among the works of all Chinese poets were usually written as parting gifts from the authors to their hosts.

As it nears the sea, the river makes a great sweep round Nanking and flows through what was once the State of Wu, now Kiangsu. This and the neighbouring States of Yüeh and Ch'u (the modern Chékiang and parts of Hunan, Kweichow, and Kiangsi) is the country painted in such lovely, peaceful pictures by Li T'ai-po and his brother poets. The climate being mild, the willows which grow on the banks of the rivers and canals are seldom bare and begin to show the faint colour of Spring by the middle of January; and, before many days, the soft bud-sheaths, called by the Chinese "willow-snow," lie thick on the surface of the water. Plum-trees flower even while the rare snow-falls turn the ground white, and soon after the New Year, the moment when, according to the Chinese calendar, Spring "opens," the fields are pink with peach-bloom, and gold with rape-blossom, while the air is sweetly scented by the flowers of the beans sown the Autumn before. Walls and fences are unknown, only low ridges divide the various properties, and the little houses of the farmers are built closely together in groups, as a rule to the South of a bamboo copse which acts as a screen against the Northeast winds prevailing during the Winter; the aspect of the rich plain, which produces three crops a year, is therefore that of an immense garden, and the low, grey houses, with their heavy roofs, melt into the picture as do the blue-coated people who live in them. Life is very intimate and communistic, and the affairs of every one in the village are known to every one else. The silk industry being most important, mulberry-trees are grown in great numbers to provide the silk-worms with the leaves upon which they subsist, and are kept closely pollarded in order that they may produce as much foliage as possible.

This smiling country on the river-banks, and to the South, provides a striking contrast to those provinces lying farther North and West. Shantung, the birthplace of Confucius, is arid and filled with rocky, barren hills, and the provinces of Chili, Shansi, Shensi, and Kansu, which extend Westward, skirting the Great Wall, are also sandy and often parched for lack of water, while Szechwan, lying on the Tibetan border, although rich and well irrigated, is barred from the rest of China by tremendous mountain ranges difficult to pass. One range, called the "Mountains of the Two-Edged Sword," was, and is, especially famous. It formed an almost impassable barrier, and the great Chu Koliang, therefore, ordered that a roadway, of the kind generally known in China as *chan tao* (a road made of logs laid on piers driven into the face of a cliff and kept secure by mortar) be built, so that travellers from Shensi might be able to cross into Szechwan. This road is described by Li T'ai-po in a very beautiful poem, "The Terraced Road of the Two-Edged Sword Mountains."

These varied scenes among which the poets lived differed again from those which flashed before their mental eyes when their thoughts followed the soldiers to the far Northwest, to the country where the Hsiung Nu and other Mongol tribes lived, those Barbarians, as the Chinese called them, who perpetually menaced China with invasion, who, in the picturesque phraseology of the time, desired that their horses should "drink of the streams of the South." These Mongol hordes harassed the Chinese State from its earliest days; it was as a defence against them that the "First Emperor" erected the Great Wall, with a length of "ten thousand *li*" as Chinese hyperbole unblushingly states—its real length is fifteen hundred miles. This defence could, however, merely mitigate, not avert, the evil; only constant effort, constant fighting, could prevent the Mongol hordes from overrunning the country.

Beyond the Jade Pass in Kansu, through which the soldiers marched, lay the desert and the steppes stretching to the very "Edge of Heaven," and on this

"edge" stood the "Heaven-high Hills"; while, on the way, surrounded by miles of sand, lay the Ch'ing Hai Lake (Green, or Inland, Sea), a dreary region at best, and peopled by the ghosts of countless soldiers who had fallen in battle on the "Yellow Sand Fields."

In addition to these backgrounds of reality, that of the Fertile Empire and that of the Barren Waste, there was another—that of the "Western Paradise" inhabited by the *Hsi Wang Mu* (Western Empress Mother) and those countless beings who, after a life in this world, had attained Immortality and dwelt among the *Hsien*, supernatural creatures living in this region of perfect happiness supposed to lie among the K'un Lun Mountains in Central Asia. From the spontaneous manner in which they constantly refer to it, and from the vividness of the pictures suggested by their references to it, one can almost question whether this Fairy World, the World of Imagination, with its inhabitants, were not as real to the writers of the early days as was the World of Actuality. Thus the topography of Chinese poetry may be said to fall into three main divisions, and allusions are made to

1. The beautiful scenes in the Eighteen Provinces.
2. The desolate region beyond the Jade Pass.
3. The glorious "Western Paradise."

Ideals determine government, and government determines social life, and so social life, with all that the term connotes is the essence of every literature.

The theory upon which the Chinese State was established is exceedingly interesting, and although the ideal was seldom reached, the system proved enduring and brought happiness to the people who lived under it.

The Emperor was regarded as the Son of the Celestial Ruler, as Father of his people, and was supposed to direct his Empire as a father should direct his children, never by the strong arm of force, but by loving precept and example. In theory, he held office only so long as peace and prosperity lasted, this beneficent state of things being considered a

proof that the ruler's actions were in accordance with the decree of Heaven. Rebellion and disorder were an equal proof that the Son of Heaven had failed in his great mission; and, if wide-spread discontent continued, it was his duty to abdicate. The "divine right of kings" has never existed in China; its place has been taken by the people's right to rebellion.

This system created a very real democracy, which so struck the Dutchman, Van Braam, when he conducted a commercial embassy to the Court of Ch'ien Lung in 1794, that he dedicated his account of the embassy to "His Excellency George Washington, President of the United States," in the following remarkable manner:

Sir,

Travels among the most ancient people which now inhabits this globe, and which owes its long existence to the system which makes its chief the Father of the National Family, cannot appear under better auspices than those of the Great Man who was elected, by the universal suffrage of a new nation, to preside at the conquest of liberty, and in the establishment of a government in which everything bespeaks the love of the First Magistrate for the people. Permit me thus to address the homage of my veneration to the virtues, which in your Excellency, afford so striking a resemblance between Asia, and America. I cannot shew myself more worthy of the title of Citizen of the United States, which is become my adopted country, than by paying a just tribute to the Chief, whose principles and sentiments, are calculated to procure them a duration equal to that of the Chinese Empire.

The semi-divine person of the Emperor was also regarded as the "Sun" of the Empire, whose light should shine on high and low alike. His intelligence was compared to the penetrating rays of the sun, while that of the Empress found its counterpart in the soft, suffusing brilliance of the moon. In reading Chinese poetry, it is important to keep these similes in mind, as the poets constantly employ them; evil counsellors, for instance,

are often referred to as "clouds which obscure the sun."

The Son of Heaven was assisted in the government of the country by a large body of officials, drawn from all classes of the people. How these officials were chosen, and what were their functions, will be stated presently. At the moment, we must take a cursory glance at Chinese history, since it is an ever-present subject of allusion in poetry.

Two favourite, and probably mythical, heroes, the Emperors Yao and Shun, who are supposed to have lived in the semi-legendary period two or three thousand years before the birth of Christ, have been held up ever since as shining examples of perfection. Shun chose as his successor a man who had shown such great engineering talent in draining the country, always in danger of floods from the swollen rivers, that the Chinese still say: "Without Yü, we should all have been fishes." Yü founded the first hereditary dynasty, called the Hsia Dynasty, and, since then, every time the family of the Emperor has changed, a new dynasty has been inaugurated, the name being chosen by its first Emperor. With Yü's accession to the throne in 2205 B.C., authentic Chinese history begins.

Several centuries later, when Yü's descendants had deteriorated and become effete, a virtuous noble named T'ang organized the first of those rebellions against bad government so characteristic of Chinese history. He was successful, and in his "Announcement to the Ten Thousand Districts," set forth what we should call his platform in these words: "The way of Heaven is to bless the good and punish the wicked. It sent down calamities upon the house of Hsia to make manifest its crimes. Therefore I, the little child, charged with the decree of Heaven and its bright terrors, did not dare forgive the criminal. . . It is given to me, the one man, to ensure harmony and tranquillity to your State and families; and now I know not whether I may not offend the Powers above and below. I am fearful and trembling lest I should fall into a deep abyss." The doctrine that Heaven sends calamity as a punishment

for man's sin is referred to again and again in the ancient "Book of History" and "Book of Odes." It is a belief common to all primitive peoples, but in China it persisted until the present republic demolished the last of the long line of dynastic empires.

T'ang made a great and wise ruler. The Dynasty of Shang, which he founded, lasted until 1122 B.C., and was succeeded by that of Chou, the longest in the annals of Chinese history—so long, indeed, that historians divide it into three distinct periods. The first of these, "The Rise," ran from 1122 B.C. to 770 B.C.; the second, "The Age of Feudalism," endured until 500 B.C.; the third, "The Age of the Seven States," until 255 B.C. Starting under wise rulers, it gradually sank through others less competent until by 770 B.C. it was little more than a name. During the "Age of Feudalism," the numerous States were constantly at war, but eventually the strongest of them united in a group called the "Seven Masculine Powers" under the shadowy suzerainty of Chou. Although, from the political point of view, this period was full of unrest and gloom, from the intellectual it was exceedingly brilliant and is known as the "Age of Philosophers." The most famous names among the many teachers of the times are those of Lao Tzū, the founder of Taoism, and Confucius. To these men, China owes the two great schools of thought upon which her social system rests.

The "Age of the Seven States" (Masculine Powers) ended when Ch'in, one of their number, overcame and absorbed the rest. Its prince adopted the title of Shih Huang Ti, or "First Supreme Ruler," thus placing himself on an equality with Heaven. Is it to be wondered at that the scholars demurred? The literary class were in perpetual opposition to the Emperor, who finally lost patience with them altogether and decreed that all books relating to the past should be burnt, and that history should begin with him. This edict was executed with great severity, and many hundreds of the *literati* were buried alive. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the name of Shih Huang Ti is execrated, even to-day, by a nation

whose love for the written word amounts to veneration.

Although he held learning of small account, this "First Emperor," to give him his bombastic title, was an enthusiastic promoter of public works, the most important of these being the Great Wall, which has served as an age-long bulwark against the nomadic tribes of Mongolia and Central Asia. These tribes were a terror to China for centuries. They were always raiding the border country, and threatening a descent on the fertile fields beyond the mountains. The history of China is one long struggle to keep from being overrun by these tribes. There is an exact analogy to this state of affairs in the case of Roman Britain, and the perpetual vigilance it was obliged to exercise to keep out the Picts.

Shih Huang Ti based his power on fear, and it is a curious commentary upon the fact that the Ch'in Dynasty came to an end in 206 B.C., shortly after his death, and only a scant half-century after he had founded it.

A few years of struggle, during which no Son of Heaven occupied the Dragon Throne, succeeded the fall of the Ch'in Dynasty; then a certain Liu Pang, an inconsiderable town officer, proved strong enough to seize what was no one's possession and made himself Emperor, thereby founding the Han Dynasty.

The Han is one of the most famous dynasties in Chinese history. An extraordinary revival of learning took place under the successive Emperors of Han. The greatest of them, Wu Ti (140-87 B.C.), is frequently mentioned by the poets. Learning always follows trade, as has often been demonstrated. During the Han Dynasty, which lasted until A.D. 221, intercourse with all the countries of the Near East became more general than ever before, and innumerable caravans wended their slow way across the trade routes of Central Asia. Expeditions against the harassing barbarians were undertaken, and for a time their power was scotched. It was under the Han that Buddhism was introduced from India, but deeply as this has influenced the life and thought of the

Middle Kingdom, I am inclined to think that the importance of this influence has been exaggerated.

This period, and those immediately preceding it, form the poetic background of China. The ancient States, constantly referred to in the poems, do not correspond to the modern provinces. As these States did not all exist at the same moment, it is impossible to define their exact boundaries, but how strongly they were impressed upon the popular mind can be seen by the fact that, although they were merged into the Chinese Empire during the reign of Shih Huang Ti, literature continued to speak of them by their old names and, even to-day, writers often refer to them as though they were still separate entities. The names of a few of the old cities are also given, as Chin Ling, the "Golden Mound" or "Sepulchre," and Ch'ang An, "Eternal Peace," for so many centuries the capital. Its present name is Hsi An-fu, and it was here that the Manchu Court took refuge during the Boxer madness of 1900.

Little more of Chinese history need be told. Following the Han, several dynasties held sway; there were divisions between the North and South and much shifting of power. At length, in A.D. 618, Li Shih-min established the T'ang Dynasty by placing his father on the throne, and the T'ang brought law and order to the suffering country.

This period is often called the Golden Age of Chinese Learning. The literary examinations introduced under the Han were perfected, poets and painters were encouraged, and strangers flocked to the Court at Ch'ang An. The reign of Ming Huang (A.D. 712-756), the "Brilliant Emperor," was the culmination of this remarkable era. China's three greatest poets, Li T'ai-po, Tu Fu, and Po Chü-i, all lived during his long reign of forty-five years. Auspiciously as this reign had begun, however, it ended sadly. The Emperor, more amiable than perspicacious, fell into the toils of his favourite concubine, the lovely Yang Kuei-fei, to whom he was slavishly devoted. The account of their love story—a theme celebrated by poets, painters, and play-wrights—will be found in the note to "Songs to the

Peonies." A rebellion which broke out was crushed, but the soldiers refused to defend the cause of the Emperor until he had issued an order for the execution of Yang Kuei-fei, whom they believed to be responsible for the trouble. Broken-hearted, the Emperor complied, but from this date the glory of the dynasty was dimmed. Throughout its waning years, the shadow of the dreaded Tartars grew blacker and blacker, and finally, in A.D. 907, the T'ang Dynasty fell.

Later history need not concern us here, since most of the poems in this book were written during the T'ang period. Though these poems deal largely with what I have called the historical background, they deal more largely with the social background and it is, above all, this social background which must be understood.

If the Emperor were the "Son of Heaven," he administered his Empire with the help of very human persons, the various officials, and these officials owed their positions, great and small, partly to the Emperor's attitude, it is true, but in far greater degree to their prowess in the literary examinations. An official of the first rank might owe his preferment to the Emperor's beneficence; but to reach an altitude where this beneficence could operate, he had to climb through all the lower grades, and this could only be done by successfully passing all the examinations, one after the other. The curious thing is that these examinations were purely literary. They consisted not only in knowing thoroughly the classics of the past, but in being able to recite long passages from them by heart, and with this was included the ability to write one's self, not merely in prose, but in poetry. Every one in office had to be, perforce, a poet. No one could hope to be the mayor of a town or the governor of a province unless he had attained a high proficiency in the art of poetry. This is brought strikingly home to us by the fact that one of the chief pastimes of educated men was to meet together for the purpose of playing various games all of which turned on the writing of verse.

The examinations which brought

this strange state of things were four. The first, which conferred the degree of *Hsiu Ts'ai*, "Flowering Talent," could be competed for only by those who had already passed two minor examinations, one in their district, and one in the department in which this district was situated. The *Hsiu Ts'ai* examinations were held twice every three years in the provincial capitals. There were various grades of the "Flowering Talent" degree, which is often translated as Bachelor of Arts, some of which could be bestowed through favour or acquired by purchase. The holders of it were entitled to wear a dress of blue silk, and in Chinese novels the hero is often spoken of as wearing this colour, by which readers are to understand that he is a clever young man already on the way to preferment.

The second degree, that of *Ch'ü Jên*, "Promoted Man," was obtained by passing the examinations which took place every third year in all the provincial capitals simultaneously. This degree enabled its recipients to hold office, but positions were not always to hand, and frequently "Promoted Men" had to wait long before being appointed to a post; also, the offices open to them were of the lesser grades, those who aspired to a higher rank had a farther road to travel. The dress which went with this degree was also of silk, but of a darker shade than that worn by "bachelors."

The third examination for the *Chin Shih*, or "Entered Scholar," degree was also held triennially, but at the national capital, and only those among the *Ch'ü Jên* who had not already taken office were eligible. The men so fortunate as to pass were allowed to place a tablet over the doors of their houses, and their particular dress was of violet silk.

The fourth, which really conferred an office rather than a degree, was bestowed on men who competed in a special examination held once in three years in the Emperor's Palace. Those who were successful in this last examination became automatically *Han Lin*, or members of the Imperial Academy, which, in the picturesque phraseology of China, was called the "Forest of Pencils." A member of the Academy held his position, a

salaried one, for life, and the highest officials of the Empire were chosen from these Academicians.

This elaboration of degrees was only arrived at gradually. During the T'ang Dynasty, all the examinations were held at Ch'ang An. These four degrees of learning have often been translated as Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, Doctor of Literature, and Academician. The analogy is so far from close, however, that most modern sinologues prefer to render them indiscriminately, according to context, as student, scholar, and official.

By means of this remarkable system, which threw open the road to advancement to every man in the country capable of availing himself of it, new blood was continually brought to the top, as all who passed the various degrees became officials, expectant or in being, and of higher or lower grade according to the Chinese measure of ability. Military degrees corresponding to the civil were given; but, as these called for merely physical display, they were not highly esteemed.

Since only a few of the candidates for office passed the examinations successfully, a small army of highly educated men was dispersed throughout the country every three years. In the towns and villages they were regarded with the reverence universally paid to learning by the Chinese, and many became teachers to the rising generation in whom they cultivated a great respect for literature in general and poetry in particular.

The holders of degrees, on the other hand, entered at once upon a career as administrators. Prevented by an inexorable law—a law designed to make nepotism impossible—from holding office in their own province, they were constantly shifted from one part of the country to another, and this is a chief reason for the many poems of farewell that were written. The great desire of all officials was to remain at, or near, the Court, where the most brilliant brains of the Empire were assembled. As may be easily imagined, the intrigues and machinations employed to attain this end were many, with the result that deserving men often found themselves banished to

posts on the desolate outskirts of the country where, far from congenial intercourse, they suffered a mental exile of the most complete description. Innumerable poems dealing with this sad state are found in all Chinese anthologies.

There were nine ranks of nobility. The higher officials took the rank of their various and succeeding offices, others were ennobled for signal services performed. These titles were not hereditary in the ordinary sense, but backwards, if I can so express it. The dead ancestors of a nobleman were accorded his rank, whatever had been theirs in life, but his sons and their descendants had only such titles as they themselves might earn.

The desire to bask in the rays of the Imperial Sun was shared by ambitious fathers who longed to have their daughters appear before the Emperor, and possibly make the fortune of the family by captivating the Imperial glance. This led to the most beautiful and talented young girls being sent to the Palace, where they often lived and died without ever being summoned before the Son of Heaven. Although numberless tragic poems have been written by these unfortunate ladies, many charming romances did actually take place, made possible by the custom of periodically dispersing the superfluous Palace women and marrying them to suitable husbands.

In striking contrast to the unfortunate who dragged out a purposeless life of idleness, was the lot of the beauty who had the good fortune to capture the Imperial fancy, and who, through her influence over the Dragon Throne, virtually ruled the Middle Kingdom. No extravagancies were too great for these exquisite creatures, and many dynasties have fallen through popular revolt against the excesses of Imperial concubines.

It would be quite erroneous to suppose, however, that the Emperor's life was entirely given up to pleasure and gaiety, or that it was chiefly passed in the beautiful seclusion of the Imperial garden. The poems, it is true, generally allude to these moments, but the cares of state were many, and every day, at sunrise, officials assembled in the Au-

dience Hall to make their reports to the Emperor. Moreover, Court ceremonials were extremely solemn occasions, carried out with the utmost dignity.

As life at Court centred about the persons of the Emperor and Empress, so life in the homes of the people centred about the elders of the family. The men of wealthy families were usually of official rank, and led a life in touch with the outer world, a life of social intercourse with other men in which friendship played an all-engrossing part. This characteristic of Chinese life is one of the most striking features of the poetic background. Love poems from men to women are so rare as to be almost non-existent (striking exceptions do occur, however, several of which are translated here), but poems of grief written at parting from "the man one loves" are innumerable, and to sit with one's friends, drinking wine and reciting verses, making music or playing chess, were favourite amusements throughout the T'ang period.

Wine-drinking was general, no pleasure gathering being complete without it. The wine of China was usually made from fermented grains, but wines from grapes, plums, pears, and other fruits were also manufactured. It was carefully heated and served in tall flagons somewhat resembling our coffee-pots, and was drunk out of tiny little cups no bigger than liqueur glasses. These cups, which were never of glass, were made of various metals, of lacquered or carved wood, of semi-precious stones such as jade, or agate, or carnelian; porcelain, the usual material for wine-cups today, not having yet been invented. Custom demanded that each thimbleful be tossed off at a gulp, and many were consumed before a feeling of exhilaration could be experienced. That there was a good deal of real drunkenness, we cannot doubt, but not to the extent that is generally supposed. From the character of the men and the lives they led, it is fairly clear that most of the drinking kept within reasonable bounds. Unfortunately, in translation, the quantity imbibed at these wine-parties becomes greatly exaggerated. That wine was drunk, not merely for its taste but as a heightener

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By means of this remarkable system, which threw open the road to advancement to every man in the country capable of availing himself of it, new blood was continually brought to the top, as all who passed the various degrees became officials, expectant or in being, and of higher or lower grade according to the Chinese measure of ability. Military degrees corresponding to the civil were given; but, as these called for merely physical display, they were not highly esteemed.

Since only a few of the candidates for office passed the examinations successfully, a small army of highly educated men was dispersed throughout the country every three years. In the towns and villages they were regarded with the reverence universally paid to learning by the Chinese, and many became teachers to the rising generation in whom they cultivated a great respect for literature in general and poetry in particular.

The holders of degrees, on the other hand, entered at once upon a career as administrators. Prevented by an inexorable law—a law designed to make nepotism impossible—from holding office in their own province, they were constantly shifted from one part of the country to another, and this is a chief reason for the many poems of farewell that were written. The great desire of all officials was to remain at, or near, the Court, where the most brilliant brains of the Empire were assembled. As may be easily imagined, the intrigues and machinations employed to attain this end were many, with the result that deserving men often found themselves banished to

posts on the desolate outskirts of the country where, far from congenial intercourse, they suffered a mental exile of the most complete description. Innumerable poems dealing with this sad state are found in all Chinese anthologies.

There were nine ranks of nobility. The higher officials took the rank of their various and succeeding offices, others were ennobled for signal services performed. These titles were not hereditary in the ordinary sense, but backwards, if I can so express it. The dead ancestors of a nobleman were accorded his rank, whatever had been theirs in life, but his sons and their descendants had only such titles as they themselves might earn.

The desire to bask in the rays of the Imperial Sun was shared by ambitious fathers who longed to have their daughters appear before the Emperor, and possibly make the fortune of the family by captivating the Imperial glance. This led to the most beautiful and talented young girls being sent to the Palace, where they often lived and died without ever being summoned before the Son of Heaven. Although numberless tragic poems have been written by these unfortunate ladies, many charming romances did actually take place, made possible by the custom of periodically dispersing the superfluous Palace women and marrying them to suitable husbands.

In striking contrast to the unfortunate who dragged out a purposeless life of idleness, was the lot of the beauty who had the good fortune to capture the Imperial fancy, and who, through her influence over the Dragon Throne, virtually ruled the Middle Kingdom. No extravagancies were too great for these exquisite creatures, and many dynasties have fallen through popular revolt against the excesses of Imperial concubines.

It would be quite erroneous to suppose, however, that the Emperor's life was entirely given up to pleasure and gaiety, or that it was chiefly passed in the beautiful seclusion of the Imperial gardens. The poems, it is true, generally allude to these moments, but the cares of state were many, and every day, at sunrise, officials assembled in the Au-

dience Hall to make their reports to the Emperor. Moreover, Court ceremonials were extremely solemn occasions, carried out with the utmost dignity.

As life at Court centred about the persons of the Emperor and Empress, so life in the homes of the people centred about the elders of the family. The men of wealthy families were usually of official rank, and led a life in touch with the outer world, a life of social intercourse with other men in which friendship played an all-engrossing part. This characteristic of Chinese life is one of the most striking features of the poetic background. Love poems from men to women are so rare as to be almost non-existent (striking exceptions do occur, however, several of which are translated here), but poems of grief written at parting from "the man one loves" are innumerable, and to sit with one's friends, drinking wine and reciting verses, making music or playing chess, were favourite amusements throughout the T'ang period.

Wine-drinking was general, no pleasure gathering being complete without it. The wine of China was usually made from fermented grains, but wines from grapes, plums, pears, and other fruits were also manufactured. It was carefully heated and served in tall flagons somewhat resembling our coffee-pots, and was drunk out of tiny little cups no bigger than liqueur glasses. These cups, which were never of glass, were made of various metals, of lacquered or carved wood, of semi-precious stones such as jade, or agate, or carnelian; porcelain, the usual material for wine-cups today, not having yet been invented. Custom demanded that each thimbleful be tossed off at a gulp, and many were consumed before a feeling of exhilaration could be experienced. That there was a good deal of real drunkenness, we cannot doubt, but not to the extent that is generally supposed. From the character of the men and the lives they led, it is fairly clear that most of the drinking kept within reasonable bounds. Unfortunately, in translation, the quantity imbibed at these wine-parties becomes greatly exaggerated. That wine was drunk, not merely for its taste but as a heightener

of sensation, is evident; but the "three hundred cups" so often mentioned bear no such significance as might at first appear when the size of the cups is taken into account. Undoubtedly, also, we must regard this exact number as a genial hyperbole.

If husbands and sons could enjoy the excitement of travel, the spur of famous scenery, the gaieties of Court, and the pleasures of social intercourse, wives and daughters were obliged to find their occupations within the *Kuei* or "Women's Apartments," which included the gardens set apart for their use. The ruling spirit of the *Kuei* was the mother-in-law; and the wife of the master of the house, although she was the mother of his sons and the director of the daughters-in-law, did not reach the fulness of her power until her husband's mother had died.

The chief duty of a young wife was attendance upon her mother-in-law. With the first grey streak of daylight, she rose from her immense lacquer bed, so large as to be almost an anteroom, and, having dressed, took the old lady her tea. She then returned to her own apartment to breakfast with her husband and await the summons to attend her mother-in-law's toilet, a most solemn function, and the breakfast which followed. These duties accomplished, she was free to occupy herself as she pleased. Calligraphy, painting, writing poems and essays, were popular pursuits, and many hours were spent at the embroidery frame or in making music.

Chinese poetry is full of references to the toilet, to the intricate hair-dressing, the "moth-antennae eyebrows," the painting of faces, and all this was done in front of a mirror standing on a little rack placed on the toilet-table. A lady, writing to her absent husband, mourns that she has no heart to "make the cloud head-dress," or writes, "looking down upon my mirror in order to apply the powder and paint, I desire to keep back the tears. I fear that the people in the house will know my grief. I am ashamed."

In spite of the fact that they had never laid eyes on the men they were to marry before the wedding-day, these

young women seem to have depended upon the companionship of their husbands to a most touching extent. The occupations of the day were carried on in the *Kuei*; but, when evening came, the husband and wife often read and studied the classics together. A line from a well-known poem says, "The red sleeve replenishes the incense, at night, studying books," and the picture it calls up is that of a young man and woman in the typical surroundings of a Chinese home of the educated class. Red was the colour worn by very young women, whether married or not; as the years advanced, this was changed for soft blues and mauves, and later still for blacks, greys, or dull greens. A line such as "tears soak my dress of coarse, red silk" instantly suggests a young woman in deep grief.

The children studied every day with teachers; the sons and daughters of old servants who had, according to custom, taken the family surname, receiving the same advantages as those of the master. These last were, in all respects, brought up as children of the house, the only distinction being that whereas the master's own children sat "above" the table, facing South, the children of the servants sat "below," facing North. A more forcible reminder of their real status appeared later in life, since they were debarred from competing in the official examinations unless they left the household in which they had grown up and relinquished the family surname taken by their fathers. A curious habit among families, which extended even to groups of friends, was the designation by numbers according to age, a man being familiarly known as Yung Seven or T'sui Fifteen. It will be noticed that such designations often occur in the poems.

Only four classes of persons were recognized as being of importance to society and these were rated in the following order: scholars, agriculturists, labourers, and traders — officials, of course, coming under the generic name of scholars. Soldiers, actors, barbers, etc., were considered a lower order of beings entirely and, as such, properly despised.

China, essentially an agricultural coun-

try, was economically self-sufficient, producing everything needed by her population. The agriculturalist was, therefore, the very backbone of the state.

In rendering Chinese poetry, the translator must constantly keep in mind the fact that the architectural background differs from that of every other country, and that our language does not possess terms which adequately describe it.

Apart from the humble cottages of the very poor, all dwelling-houses, or *chia*, are constructed on the same general plan. They consist of a series of one-story buildings divided by courtyards, which, in the houses of the well-to-do, are connected by covered passages running along the sides of each court. A house is cut up into *chien*, or divisions, the number, within limits, being determined by the wealth and position of the owners. The homes of the people, both rich and poor, are arranged in three or five *chien*; official residences are of seven *chien*; Imperial palaces of nine. Each of these *chia* consists of several buildings, the number of which vary considerably, more buildings being added as the family grows by the marriage of the sons who, with their wives and children, are supposed to live in patriarchal fashion in their father's house. If officials sometimes carried their families with them to the towns where they were stationed, there were other posts so distant or so desolate as to make it practically impossible to take women to them. In these cases, the families remained behind under the paternal roof.

How a house was arranged can be grasped from the following description. Doors lead to the garden from the study, the guest-room, and the Women's Apartments. These are made in an endless diversity of shapes and add greatly to the picturesqueness of house and grounds. Those through which a number of people are to pass to and fro are often large circles, while smaller and more intimate doors are cut to the outlines of fans, leaves, or flower vases. In addition to the doors, blank spaces of wall are often broken by openings at the height of a window, such openings being most fan-

tastic and filled with intricately designed lattice-work.

I have already spoken of the *Kuei*, or Women's Apartments. In poetry, this part of the *chia* is alluded to in a highly figurative manner. The windows are "gold" or "jade" windows; the door by which it is approached is the *Lan Kuei*, or "Orchid Door." Indeed, the sweet-scented little epidendrum called by the Chinese, *lan*, is continually used to suggest the *Kuei* and its inmates.

Besides the house proper, there are numerous structures erected in gardens, for the Chinese spend much of their time in their gardens. No nation is more passionately fond of nature, whether in its grander aspects, or in the charming arrangements of potted flowers which take the place of our borders in their pleasure grounds. Among these outdoor buildings none is more difficult to describe than the *lou*, since we have nothing which exactly corresponds to it. *Lous* appear again and again in Chinese poetry, but just what to call them in English is a puzzle. They are neither summer-houses, nor pavilions, nor cupolas, but a little of all three. Always of more than one story, they are employed for differing purposes; for instance, the *fo lou* is an upper chamber where Buddhist images are kept. The *lou* generally referred to in poetry, however, is really a "pleasure-house-in-the-air," used as the Italians use their belvederes. Here the inmates of the house sit and look down upon the garden or over the surrounding country, or watch "the sun disappear in the long grass at the edge of the horizon" or "the moon rise like a golden hook."

Another erection foreign to Western architecture is the *t'ai*, or terrace. In early days, there were many kinds of *t'ai*, ranging from the small, square, uncovered stage still seen in private gardens and called *yüeh t'ai*, "moon terrace," to immense structures like high, long, open platforms, built by Emperors and officials for various reasons. Many of these last were famous; I have given the histories of several of them in the notes illustrating the poems, at the end of the book.

It will be observed that I have said

practically nothing about religion. The reason is partly that the three principal religions practised by the Chinese are either so well known, as Buddhism, for example, or so difficult to describe, as Taoism and the ancient religion of China now merged in the teachings of Confucius; partly that none of them could be profitably compressed into the scope of this Introduction; but chiefly because the subject of religion, in the poems here translated, is generally referred to in its superstitious aspects alone. The superstitions which have grown up about Taoism particularly are innumerable. I have dealt with a number of these in the notes to the poems in which they appear. Certain supernatural personages, without a knowledge of whom much of the poetry would be unintelligible, I have set down in the following list:

HSIEN

Immortals who live in the Taoist Paradises. Human beings may attain "*Hsien-ship*," or Immortality, by living a life of contemplation in the hills. In translating the term, we have used the word "Immortals."

SHÊN

Beneficent beings who inhabit the higher regions. They are kept extremely busy attending to their duties as tutelary deities of the roads, hills, rivers, etc., and it is also their function to intervene and rescue deserving people from the attacks of their enemies.

KUEI

A proportion of the souls of the departed who inhabit the "World of Shades," a region resembling this world, which is the "World of Light," in every particular, with the important exception that it has no sunshine. Kindly *kuei* are known, but the influence generally suggested is an evil one. They may only return to the World of Light between sunset and sunrise, except upon the fifth day of the Fifth Month (June), when they are free

to come during the time known as the "hour of the horse," from eleven A.M. to one P.M.

YAO KUAU

A class of fierce demons who live in the wild regions of the Southwest and delight in eating the flesh of human beings.

There are also supernatural creatures whose names carry a symbolical meaning. A few of them are:

CHI' LIN

A composite animal, somewhat resembling the fabulous unicorn, whose arrival is a good omen. He appears when sages are born.

DRAGON

A symbol of the forces of Heaven, also the emblem of Imperial power. Continually referred to in poetry as the steed which transports a philosopher who has attained Immortality to his home in the Western Paradise.

FÊNG HUANG

A glorious bird, symbol of the Empress, therefore often associated with the dragon. The conception of this bird is probably based on the Argus pheasant. It is described as possessing every grace and beauty. A Chinese author, quoted by F. W. Williams in "The Middle Kingdom," writes: "It resembles a wild swan before and a unicorn behind; it has the throat of a swallow, the bill of a cock, the neck of a snake, the tail of a fish, the forehead of a crane, the crown of a mandarin drake, the stripes of a dragon, and the vaulted back of a tortoise. The feathers have five colours which are named after the five cardinal virtues, and it is five cubits in height; the tail is graduated like the pipes of a gourd-organ, and its song resembles the music of the instrument, having five modulations." Properly speaking, the female is *Huang*, the male *Fêng*, but the two words are

usually given in combination to denote the species. Some one, probably in desperation, once translated the combined words as "phoenix," and this term has been employed ever since. It conveys, however, an entirely wrong impression of the creature. To Western readers, the word "phoenix" suggests a bird which, being consumed by fire, rises in a new birth from its own ashes. The *Fêng Huang* has no such power, it is no symbol of hope or resurrection, but suggests friendship and affection of all sorts. Miss Lowell and I have translated the name as "crested love-pheasant," which seems to us to convey a better idea of the beautiful *Fêng Huang*, the bird which brings happiness.

LUAN

A supernatural bird sometimes confused with the above. It is a sacred creature, connected with fire, and a symbol of love and passion, of the relation between men and women.

CHIEN

The "paired-wings bird," described in Chinese books as having one wing and one eye, for which reason two must unite for either of them to fly. It is often referred to as suggesting undying affection.

Real birds and animals also have symbolical attributes. I give only three:

CRANE

Represents longevity, and is employed, as is the dragon, to transport those who have attained to Immortality to the Heavens.

YUAN YANG

The exquisite little mandarin ducks, an unvarying symbol of conjugal fidelity. Li T'ai-po often alludes to them and declares that, rather than be separated, they would "prefer to die ten thousand deaths, and have their gauze-like wings torn to fragments."

WILD GEESE

Symbols of direct purpose, their flight being always in a straight line. As they follow the sun's course, allusions to their departure suggest Spring, to their arrival, Autumn.

A complete list of the trees and plants endowed with symbolical meanings would be almost endless. Those most commonly employed in poetry in a suggestive sense are:

CH'ANG P'U

A plant growing in the Taoist Paradise and much admired by the Immortals, who are the only beings able to see its purple blossoms. On earth, it is known as the sweet flag, and has the peculiarity of never blossoming. It is hung on the lintels of doors on the fifth day of the Fifth Month to ward off the evil influences which may be brought by the *kuei* on their return to this world during the "hour of the horse."

PEONY

Riches and prosperity.

LOTUS

Purity. Although it rises from the mud, it is bright and spotless.

PLUM-BLOSSOM

Literally "the first," it being the first of the "hundred flowers" to open. It suggests the beginnings of things, and is also one of the "three friends" who do not fear the Winter cold, the other two being the pine and the bamboo.

LAN

A small epidendrum, translated in this book as "spear-orchid." It is a symbol for noble men and beautiful, refined women. Confucius compared the *Chün Tzū*, Princely or Superior Man, to this little orchid with its delightful scent. In

poetry, it is also used in reference to the Women's Apartments and everything connected with them, suggesting, as it does, the extreme of refinement.

CHRYSANTHEMUM

Fidelity and constancy. In spite of frost, its flowers continue to bloom.

LING CHIH

Longevity. This fungus, which grows at the roots of trees, is very durable when dried.

PINE

Longevity, immutability, steadfastness.

BAMBOO

This plant has as many virtues as it has uses; the principal ones are modesty, protection from defilement, unchangeableness.

WU-T'UNG

A tree whose botanical name is *sterculia platanifolia*. Its only English name seems to be "umbrella-tree," which has proved so unattractive in its context in the poems that we have left it untranslated. It is a symbol for integrity, high principles, great sensibility. When "Autumn stands," on August seventh, although it is still to all intents and purposes Summer, the wu-t'ung tree drops one leaf. Its wood, which is white, easy to cut, and very light, is the only kind suitable for making that intimate instrument which quickly betrays the least emotion of the person playing upon it—the *ch'in*, or table-lute.

WILLOW

A prostitute, or any very frivolous person. Concubines writing to their lords often refer to themselves under this figure, in the same spirit of self-depreciation which prompts them to employ the

euphemism, "Unworthy One," instead of the personal pronoun. Because of its lightness and pliability, it conveys also the idea of extreme vitality.

PEACH-BLOSSOM

Beautiful women and ill-success in life. The first suggestion, on account of the exquisite colour of the flower; the second, because of its perishability.

PEACH-TREE

Longevity. This fruit is supposed to ripen once every three thousand years on the trees of Paradise, and those who eat of this celestial species never die.

MULBERRY

Utility. Also suggests a peaceful hamlet. Its wood is used in the making of bows and the kind of temple-drums called *mo yü*—wooden fish. Its leaves feed the silkworms.

PLANTAIN

Sadness and grief. It is symbolical of a heart which is not "flat" or "level," as the Chinese say, not open or care-free, but of one which is "tightly rolled." The sound of rain on its leaves is very mournful, therefore an allusion to the plantain always means sorrow. Planted outside windows already glazed with silk, its heavy green leaves soften the glaring light of Summer, and it is often used for this purpose.

Nothing has been more of a stumbling-block to translators than the fact that the Chinese year—which is strictly lunar, with an intercalary month added at certain intervals—begins a month later than ours; or, to be more exact, it is calculated from the first new moon after the sun enters Aquarius, which brings the New Year at varying times from the end of January to the middle of February. For translation purposes, however, it is safe to count the Chinese

months as always one later by our calendar than the number given would seem to imply. By this calculation the "First Month" is February, and so on throughout the year.

The day is divided into twelve periods of two hours each beginning at eleven p.m. and each of these periods is called by the name of an animal — horse, deer, snake, bat, etc. As these names are not duplicated, the use of them tells at once whether the hour is day or night. Ancient China's method of telling time was by means of slow and evenly burning sticks made of a composition of clay and sawdust, or by the clepsydra, or water-clock. Water-clocks are mentioned several times in these poems.

So much for what I have called the backgrounds of Chinese poetry. I must now speak of that poetry itself, and of Miss Lowell's and my method of translating it.

Chinese prosody is a very difficult thing for an Occidental to understand. Chinese is a monosyllabic language, and this reduces the word-sounds so considerably that speech would be almost impossible were it not for the invention of tones by which the same sound can be made to do the duty of four in the Mandarin dialect, five in the Nankingese, nine in the Cantonese, etc., a different tone inflection totally changing the meaning of a word. Only two chief tones are used in poetry, the "level" and the "oblique," but the oblique tone is subdivided into three, which makes four different inflections possible to every sound. Of course, like English and other languages, the same word may have several meanings, and in Chinese these meanings are bewilderingly many; the only possible way of determining which one is correct is by its context. These tones constitute, at the outset, the principal difference which divides the technique of Chinese poetry from our own. Another is to be found in the fact that nothing approaching our metrical foot is possible in a tongue which knows only single syllables. Rhyme does exist, but there are only a little over a hundred rhymes, as tone inflection does not change a word in that particular. Such a paucity of rhyme would seriously

affect the richness of any poetry, if again the Chinese had not overcome this lingual defect by the employment of a juxtaposing pattern made up of their four poetic tones. And these tones come to the rescue once more when we consider the question of rhythm. Monosyllables in themselves always produce a staccato effect, which tends to make all rhythm composed of them monotonous, if indeed, it does not destroy it altogether. The tones cause what I may call a psychological change in the time-length of these monosyllables, which change not only makes true rhythm possible, but allows marked varieties of the basic beat.

One of the chief differences between poetry and prose is that poetry must have a more evident pattern. The pattern of Chinese poetry is formed out of three elements: line, rhyme, and tone.

The Chinese attitude toward line is almost identical with that of the French. French prosody counts every syllable as a foot, and a line is made up of so many counted feet. If any of my readers has ever read French alexandrines aloud to a Frenchman, read them as we should read English poetry, seeking to bring out the musical stress, he will remember the look of sad surprise which crept over his hearer's face. Not so was this verse constructed; not so is it to be read. The number of syllables to a line is counted, that is the secret of French classic poetry; the number of syllables is counted in Chinese. But — and we come to a divergence — this method of counting does, in French practice, often do away with the rhythm so delightful to an English ear; in Chinese, no such violence occurs, as each syllable is a word and no collection of such words can fall into a metric pulse as French words can, and, in their *Chansons*, are permitted to do.

The Chinese line pattern is, then, one of counted words, and these counted words are never less than three, nor more than seven, in regular verse; irregular is a different matter, as I shall explain shortly. Five and seven word lines are cut by a caesura, which comes after the second word in a five-word line, and after the fourth in a seven-word line.

Rhyme is used exactly as we use it, at

the ends of lines. Internal rhyming is common, however, in a type of poem called a *fu*, which I shall deal with when I come to the particular kinds of verse.

Tone is everywhere, obviously, and is employed, not arbitrarily, but woven into a pattern of its own which again is in a more or less loose relation to rhyme. By itself, the tone-pattern alternates in a peculiar manner in each line, the last line of a stanza conforming to the order of tones in the first, the intervening lines varying methodically. I have before me a poem in which the tone-pattern is alike in lines one, four, and eight, of an eight-line stanza, as are lines two and six, and lines three and seven, while line five is the exact opposite of lines two and six. In the second stanza of the same poem, the pattern is kept, but adversely; the tones do not follow the same order, but conform in similarity of grouping. I use this example merely to show what is meant by tone-pattern. It will serve to illustrate how much diversity and richness this tone-chiming is capable of bringing to Chinese poetry.

Words which rhyme must be in the same tone in regular verse, and unrhymed lines must end on an oblique tone if the rhyme-tone is level, and *vice versa*. The level tone is preferred for rhyme.

In the early Chinese poetry, called *Ku-shih* (Old Poems), the tones were practically disregarded. But in the *Lü-shih* (Regulated Poems) the rules regarding them are very strict. The *lü-shih* are supposed to date from the beginning of the T'ang Dynasty. A *lü-shih* poem proper should be of eight lines, though this is often extended to sixteen, but it must be in either the five-word line, or the seven-word line, metre. The poets of the T'ang-Dynasty, however, were by no means the slaves of *lü-shih*; they went their own way, as good poets always do, conforming when it pleased them and disregarding when they chose. It depended on the character of the poet. Tu Fu was renowned for his careful versification; Li T'ai-po, on the other hand, not infrequently rebelled and made his own rules. In his "Drinking Song," which is in seven-word lines, he suddenly dashes in two three-word lines, a proceeding

which must have been greatly upsetting to the purists. It is amusing to note that his "Taking Leave of Tu Fu" is in the strictest possible form, which is at once a tribute and a poking of fun at his great friend and contemporary.

Regular poems of more than sixteen lines are called *p'ai lu*, and these may run to any length; Tu Fu carried them to forty, eighty, and even to two hundred lines. Another form, always translated as "short-stop," cuts the eight-line poem in two. In theory, the short-stop holds the same relation to the eight-line poem that the Japanese *hokku* does to the *tanka*, although of course it preceded the *hokku* by many centuries. It is supposed to suggest rather than to state, being considered as an eight-line poem with its end in the air. In suggestion, however, the latter Japanese form far outdoes it.

So called "irregular verse" follows the writer's inclination within the natural limits of all Chinese prosody.

A *tzü* may be taken to mean a lyric, if we use that term, not in its dictionary sense, but as all modern poets employ it. It may vary its line length, but must keep the same variation in all the stanzas.

Perhaps the most interesting form to modern students is the *fu*, in which the construction is almost identical with that of "polyphonic prose." The lines are so irregular in length that the poem might be mistaken for prose, had we not a corresponding form to guide us. The rhymes appear when and where they will, in the middle of the lines or at the end, and sometimes there are two or more together. I have been told that Persia has, or had, an analogous form, and if so modern an invention as "polyphonic prose" derives, however unconsciously, from two such ancient countries as China and Persia, the fact is, at least, interesting.

The earliest examples of Chinese poetry which have come down to us are a collection of rhymed ballads in various metres, of which the most usual is four words to a line. They are simple, straightforward pieces, often of a strange poignance, and always reflecting the quiet, peaceful habits of a people engaged in agriculture. The oldest were probably

composed about 2000 B.C. and the others at varying times from then until the Sixth Century B.C., when Confucius gathered them into the volume known as the "Book of Odes." Two of these odes are translated in this book. The next epoch in the advance of poetry-making was introduced by Ch'ü Yüan (312-295 B.C.), a famous statesman and poet, who wrote an excitable, irregular style in which the primitive technical rules were disregarded, their place being taken by exigencies of emotion and idea. We are wont to regard a poetical technique determined by feeling alone as a very modern innovation, and it is interesting to note that the method is, on the contrary, as old as the hills. These rhapsodical allegories culminated in a poem entitled "Li Sao," or "Falling into Trouble," which is one of the most famous of ancient Chinese poems. A further development took place under the Western Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 25), when Su Wu invented the five-character poem, *ku fêng*; these poems were in Old Style, but had five words to a line. It is during this same period that poems with seven words to a line appeared. Legend has it that they were first composed by the Emperor Wu of Han, and that he hit upon the form on an occasion when he and his Ministers were drinking wine and capping verses at a feast on the White Beam Terrace. Finally, under the Empress Wu Hou, early in the T'ang Dynasty, the *lü-shih*, or "poems according to law," became the standard. It will be seen that the *lü-shih* found the five and seven word lines already in being and had merely to standardize them. The important gift which the *lü-shih* brought to Chinese prosody was its insistence on tone.

The great period of Chinese poetry was during the T'ang Dynasty. Then lived the three famous poets, Li T'ai-po, Tu Fu, and Po Chü-i. Space forbids me to give the biographies of all the poets whose work is included in this volume, but as Li T'ai-po and Tu Fu, between them, take up more than half the book, a short account of the principal events of their lives seems necessary. I shall take them in the order of the number of their poems printed in this collection,

which also, as a matter of fact, happens to be chronological.

I have already stated in the first part of this Introduction the reasons which determined me to give so large a space to Li T'ai-po. English writers on Chinese literature are fond of announcing that Li T'ai-po is China's greatest poet; the Chinese themselves, however, award this place to Tu Fu. We may put it that Li T'ai-po was the people's poet, and Tu Fu the poet of scholars. As Po Chü-i is represented here by only one poem, no account of his life has been given. A short biography of him may be found in Mr. Waley's "A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems."

It is permitted to very few to live in the hearts of their countrymen as Li T'ai-po has lived in the hearts of the Chinese. To-day, twelve hundred and twenty years after his birth, his memory and his fame are fresh, his poems are universally recited, his personality is familiar on the stage; in fact, to use the words of a Chinese scholar, "It may be said that there is no one in the People's Country who does not know the name of Li T'ai-po." Many legends are told of his birth, his life, his death, and he is now numbered among the *Hsien* (Immortals) who inhabit the Western Paradise.

Li T'ai-po was born A.D. 701, of well-to-do parents named Li, who lived in the Village of the Green Lotus in Szechwan. He is reported to have been far more brilliant than ordinary children. When he was only five years old, he read books that other boys read at ten; at ten, he could recite the "Classics" aloud and had read the "Book of the Hundred Sages." Doubtless this precocity was due to the fact that his birth was presided over by the "Metal Star," which we know as Venus. His mother dreamt that she had conceived him under the influence of this luminary, and called him T'ai-po, "Great Whiteness," a popular name for the planet.

In spite of his learning, he was no *Shu Tai Tzu* (Book Idiot) as the Chinese say, but, on the contrary, grew up a strong young fellow, impetuous to a fault, with a lively, enthusiastic nature. He was extremely fond of sword-play, and con-

stantly made use of his skill in it to right the wrongs of his friends. However worthy his causes may have been, this propensity got him into a serious scrape. In the excitement of one of these encounters, he killed several people, and was forthwith obliged to fly from his native village. The situation was an awkward one, but the young man disguised himself as a servant and entered the employ of a minor official. This gentleman was possessed of literary ambitions and a somewhat halting talent; still we can hardly wonder that he was not pleased when his servant ended a poem in which he was hopelessly floundering with lines far better than he could make. After this, and one or two similar experiences, Li T'ai-po found it advisable to relinquish his job and depart from his master's house.

His next step was to join a scholar who disguised his real name under the pseudonym of "Stern Son of the East." The couple travelled together to the beautiful M'ín Mountains, where they lived in retirement for five years as teacher and pupil. This period, passed in reading, writing, discussing literature, and soaking in the really marvellous scenery, greatly influenced the poet's future life, and imbued him with that passionate love for nature so apparent in his work.

At the age of twenty-five, he separated from his teacher and left the mountains, going home to his native village for a time. But the love of travel was inherent in him, nowhere could hold him for long, and he soon started off on a sight-seeing trip to all those places in the Empire famous for their beauty. This time he travelled as the position of his parents warranted, and even a little beyond it. He had a retinue of servants, and spent money lavishly. This open-handedness is one of the fine traits of his character. Needy scholars and men of talent never appealed to him in vain; during a year at Yangchow, he is reported to have spent three hundred thousand ounces of silver in charity.

From Yangchow he journeyed to the province of Hupeh ("North of the Lake") where, in the district of the "Dreary Clouds," he stayed at the house of a

family named Hsü, which visit resulted in his marriage with one of the daughters. Li T'ai-po lived in Hupeh for some years — he himself says three — then his hunger for travel reasserted itself and he was off again. After some years of wandering, while visiting a magistrate in Shantung, an incident occurred which had far-reaching consequences. A prisoner was about to be flogged. Li T'ai-po, who was passing, glanced at the man, and happening to be possessed of a shrewd insight into character, realized at once that here was an unusual person. He secured the man's release, and twenty-five years later this action bore fruit as the sequel will show. The freed prisoner was Kuo Tz'ü-i, who became one of China's most powerful generals and the saviour of the T'ang Dynasty.

It will be noticed that nothing has been said of the poet taking any examinations, and for the excellent reason that he never thought it worth while to present himself as a candidate. The simple fact appears to be that geniuses often do not seem to find necessary what other men consider of supreme importance. Presumably, also, he had no particular desire for an official life. The gifts of Heaven go by favour and the gifts of man are strangely apt to do the same thing, in spite of the excellent rules devised to order them. Li T'ai-po's career owed nothing to either the lack of official degrees or official interest. What he achieved, he owed to himself; what he failed in came from the same source.

About this time, the poet and a few congenial friends formed the coterie of "The Six Idlers of the Bamboo Brook." They retired to the Ch'u Lai Mountain and spent their time in drinking, reciting poems, writing beautiful characters, and playing on the table-lute. It must be admitted that Li T'ai-po was an inveterate and inordinate drinker, and far more often than was wise in the state called by his countrymen "great drunk." To this propensity he was indebted for all his ill fortune, as it was to his poetic genius that he owed all his good.

So the years passed until, when he was forty-two, he met the Taoist priest, Wu Yün. They immediately became intimate,

and on Wu Yün's being called to the capital, Li T'ai-po accompanied him. Wu Yün took occasion to tell the Emperor of his friend's extraordinary talent. The Emperor was interested, the poet was sent for, and introduced by Ho Chih-chang, was received by the Son of Heaven in the Golden Bells Hall.

The native accounts of this meeting state that "in his discourses upon the affairs of the Empire, the words rushed from his mouth like a mountain torrent." Ming Huang, who was enchanted, ordered food to be brought and helped the poet himself.

So Li T'ai-po became attached to the Court and was made an honorary member of the "Forest of Pencils." He was practically the Emperor's secretary and wrote the Emperor's edicts, but this was by the way—his real duty was simply to write what he chose and when, and recite these poems at any moment that it pleased the Emperor to call upon him to do so.

Li T'ai-po, with his love of wine and good-fellowship, was well suited for the life of the gay and dissipated Court of Ming Huang, then completely under the influence of the beautiful concubine, Yang Kuei-fei. Conspicuous among the Emperor's entourage was Ho Chih-chang, a famous statesman, poet, and calligraphist, who, on reading Li T'ai-po's poetry, is said to have sighed deeply and exclaimed: "This is not the work of a human being, but of a T'sé Hsien (Banished Immortal)." To understand fully the significance of this epithet, it must be realized that mortals who have already attained immortality, but who have committed some fault, may be banished from Paradise to expiate their sin on earth.

For about two years, Li T'ai-po led the life of supreme favourite in the most brilliant Court in the world. The fact that when sent for to compose or recite verses he was not unapt to be drunk was of no particular importance since, after being summarily revived with a dash of cold water, he could always write or chant with his accustomed verve and dexterity. His influence over the Emperor became so great that it roused the jealousy, and eventually the hatred, of Kao Li-shih, the

Chief Eunuch, who, until then had virtually ruled his Imperial master. On one occasion, when Li T'ai-po was more than usually incapacitated, the Emperor ordered Kao to take off the poet's shoes. This was too much, and from that moment the eunuch's malignity became an active intriguing to bring about his rival's downfall. He found the opportunity he needed in the vanity of Yang Kuei-fei. Persuading this lady that Li T'ai-po's "Songs to the Peonies" contained a veiled insult directed at her, he enlisted her anger against the poet and so gained an important ally to his cause. On three separate occasions when Ming Huang wished to confer official rank upon the poet, Yang Kuei-fei interfered and persuaded the Emperor to forego his intention. Li T'ai-po was of too independent a character, and too little of a courtier, to lift a finger to placate his enemies. But the situation became so acute that at last he begged leave to retire from the Court altogether. His request granted, he immediately formed a new group of seven congenial souls and with them departed once more to the mountains. This new association called itself "The Eight Immortals of the Wine-cup."

Although Li T'ai-po had asked for his own dismissal, he had really been forced to ask it, and his banishment from the "Imperial Sun," with all that "Sun" implied, was a blow from which he never recovered. His later poems are full of more or less veiled allusions to his unhappy state.

The next ten years were spent in his favourite occupation of travelling, especially in the provinces of Szechwan, Hunan, and Hupeh.

Meanwhile, political conditions were growing steadily worse. Popular discontent at the excesses of Yang Kuei-fei and her satellite An Lu-shan were increasing, and finally, in A.D. 755, rebellion broke out. I have dealt with this rebellion earlier in this Introduction, and a more detailed account is given in the Notes; I shall, therefore, do no more than mention it here. Sometime during the preceding unrest, Li T'ai-po, weary of moving from place to place, had taken the

position of adviser to Li Ling, Prince of Yung. In the wide spread disorder caused by the rebellion, Li Ling conceived the bold idea of establishing himself South of the Yangtze as Emperor on his own account. Pursuing his purpose, he started at the head of his troops for Nanking. Li T'ai-po strongly disapproved of the Prince's course, a disapproval which affected that headstrong person not at all, and the poet was forced to accompany his master on the march to Nanking.

At Nanking, the Prince's army was defeated by the Imperial troops, and immediately after the disaster Li T'ai-po fled, but was caught, imprisoned, and condemned to death. Now came the sequel to the incident which had taken place long before at Shantung. The Commander of the Imperial forces was no other than Kuo Tzū-i, the former prisoner whose life Li T'ai-po had saved. On learning the sentence passed upon the poet, Kuo Tzū-i intervened and threatened to resign his command unless his benefactor were spared. Accordingly Li T'ai-po's sentence was changed to exile and he was released, charged to depart immediately for some great distance where he could do no harm. He set out for Yeh Lang, a desolate spot beyond the "Five Streams," in Kueichow. This was the country of the *yao kuai*, the man-eating demons; and whether he believed in them or not, the thought of existence in such a gloomy solitude must have filled him with desperation.

He had not gone far, luckily, when a general amnesty was declared, and he was permitted to return and live with his friend and disciple, Lu Yang-ping, in the Lu Mountains near Kiukiang, a place which he dearly loved. Here, in A.D. 762, at the age of sixty one, he died, bequeathing all his manuscripts to Lu Yang-ping.

The tale of his drowning, repeated by Giles and others, is pure legend, as an authoritative statement of Lu Yang-ping proves. The manuscripts left to his care, and all others he could collect from friends, Lu Yang-ping published in an edition of ten volumes. This edition appeared in the year of the poet's death, and contained the following preface by Lu Yang-ping:

*Since the three dynasties of antiquity
Since the style of the 'Kuo Ping' and the 'Li Sao,'
During these thousand years and more, of those
who walked the "lonely path,"
There has been only you, you are the Solitary Man,
you are without rival.*

Li T'ai-po's poetry is full of dash and surprise. At his best, there is an extraordinary exhilaration in his work; at his worst, he is merely repetitive. Chinese critics have complained that his subjects are all too apt to be trivial, and that his range is narrow. This is quite true; poems of farewell, deserted ladies sighing for their absent lords, officials consumed by homesickness, paeans of praise for wine—in the aggregate there are too many of these. But how fine they often are! "The Lonely Wife," "Poignant Grief During a Sunny Spring," "After being Separated for a Long Time," such poems are the truth of emotion. Take again his inimitable humour in the two "Drinking Alone in the Moonlight" poems, or "Statement of Resolution; after being Drunk on a Spring Day." Then there are the poems of hyperbolic description such as "The Perils of the Shu Road," "The Northern Flight," and "The Terraced Road of the Two-Edged Sword Mountains." Mountains seem to be in his very blood. Of the sea, on the other hand, he has no such intimate knowledge; he sees it afar, from some height, but always as a thing apart, a distant view. The sea he gazes at; the mountains he treads under foot, their creepers scratch his face, the jutting rocks beside the path bruise his hands. He knows the straight-up, cutting-into-the-sky look of mountain peaks just above him, and feels, almost bodily, the sheer drop into the angry river tearing its way through a narrow gully below, a river he can see only by leaning dangerously far over the cliff upon which he is standing. There is a curious sense of perpendicularity about these mountain rhapsodies. The vision is strained up for miles, and shot suddenly down for hundreds of feet. The tactile effect of them is astounding; they are not to be read, but experienced. And yet I am loth to say that Li T'ai-po is at his greatest in description, with poems so full of human passion

and longing as "The Lonely Wife," and "Poignant Grief During a Sunny Spring," before me. There is no doubt at all that in Li T'ai-po we have one of the world's greatest lyrists.

Great though he was, it cannot be denied that he had serious weaknesses. One was his tendency to write when the mood was not there, and at these moments he was not ashamed to repeat a fancy conceived before on some other occasion. Much of his style he crystallized into a convention, and brought it out unblushingly whenever he was at a loss for something to say. Sustained effort evidently wearied him. He will begin a poem with the utmost spirit, but his energy is apt to flag and lead to a close so weak as to annoy the reader. His short poems are always admirably built, the endings complete and unexpected; the architectonics of his long poems leave much to be desired. He seems to be ridden by his own emotion, but without the power to draw it up and up to a climax; it bursts upon us in the first line, sustains itself at the same level for a series of lines, and then seems to faint exhausted, reducing the poet to the necessity of stopping as quickly as he can and with as little jar as possible. Illustrations of this tendency to a weak ending can be seen in "The Lonely Wife," "The Perils of the Shu Road," and "The Terraced Road of the Two-Edged Sword Mountains," but that he could keep his inspiration to the end on occasion, "The Northern Flight" proves.

Finally, there are his poems of battle: "Songs of the Marches," "Battle to the South of the City," and "Fighting to the South of the City." Nothing can be said of these except that they are superb. If there is a hint of let-down in the concluding lines of "Fighting to the South of the City," it is due to the frantic Chinese desire to quote from older authors, and this is an excellent example of the chief vice of Chinese poetry, since these two lines are taken from the "Tao Tê Ching," the sacred book of Taoism; the others, even the long "Songs of the Marches," are admirably sustained.

In Mr. Waley's excellent monograph on Li T'ai-po, appears the following

paragraph: "Wang An-shih (A.D. 1021-1086), the great reformer of the Eleventh Century, observes: 'Li Po's style is swift, yet never careless; lively, yet never informal. But his intellectual outlook was low and sordid. In nine poems out of ten he deals with nothing but wine and women.'" A somewhat splenetic criticism truly, but great reformers have seldom either the acumen or the sympathy necessary for the judgment of poetry. Women and wine there are in abundance, but how treated? In no mean or sordid manner certainly. Li T'ai-po was not a didactic poet, and we of the Twentieth Century may well thank fortune for that. Peradventure the Twenty-first will dote again upon the didactic, but we must follow our particular inclination which is, it must be admitted, quite counter to anything of the sort. No low or mean attitude indeed, but a rather restricted one we may, if we please, charge against Li T'ai-po. He was a sensuous realist, representing the world as he saw it, with beauty as his guiding star. Conditions to him were static; he wasted none of his force in speculating on what they should be. A scene or an emotion was, and it was his business to reproduce it, not to analyze how it had come about or what would best make its recurrence impossible. Here he is at sharp variance with Tu Fu, who probes to the roots of events even when he appears to be merely describing them. One has but to compare the "Songs of the Marches" and "Battle to the South of the City" with "The Recruiting Officers" and "Crossing the Frontier" to see the difference.

Tu Fu was born in Tu Ling, in the province of Shensi, in A.D. 713. His family was extremely poor, but his talent was so marked that at seven years old he had begun to write poetry; at nine, he could write large characters; and at fifteen, his essays and poems were the admiration of his small circle. When he was twenty-four, he went up to Ch'ang An, the capital, for his first examination—it will be remembered that, in the T'ang period, all the examinations took place at Ch'ang An. Tu Fu was perfectly qualified to pass, as every

one was very well aware, but the opinions he expressed in his examination papers were so radical that the degree was withheld. There was nothing to be done, and Tu Fu took to wandering about the country, observing and writing, but with little hope of anything save poverty to come. On one of his journeys, he met Li T'ai-po on the "Lute Terrace" in Ching Hsien. The two poets, who sincerely admired each other, became the closest friends. Several poems in this collection are addressed by one to the other.

When Tu Fu was thirty-six, it happened that the Emperor sent out invitations to all the scholars in the Empire to come to the capital and compete in an examination. Tu Fu was, of course, known to the Emperor as a man who would have been promoted but for the opinions aired in his papers. Of his learning, there could be no shadow of doubt. So Tu Fu went to Ch'ang An and waited there as an "expectant official." He waited for four years, when it occurred to him to offer three *fu* to the Emperor. The event justified his temerity, and the poet was given a post as one of the officials in the Chih Hsien library. This post he held for four years, when he was appointed to a slightly better one at Fêng-hsien. But a year later, the An Lu-shan rebellion broke out, which put a summary end to Tu Fu's position, whereupon he left Fêng-hsien and went to live with a relative at the Village of White Waters. He was still living there when the Emperor Ming Huang abdicated in favour of his son, Su Tsung. If the old Emperor had given him an office, perhaps the new one would; at any rate it was worth an attempt, for Tu Fu was in dire poverty. Having no money to hire any kind of conveyance, he started to walk to his destination, but fell in with brigands who captured him. He stayed with these brigands for over a year, but finally escaped, and at length reached Fêng Chiang, where the Emperor was in residence.

His appearance on his arrival was miserable in the extreme. Haggard and thin, his shoulders sticking out of his coat, his rags literally tied together, he

was indeed a spectacle to inspire pity, and the Emperor at once appointed him to the post of Censor. But this did not last long. He had the imprudence to remonstrate with the Emperor aent the sentence of banishment passed upon the general Tan Kuan. Considering that this clever and extremely learned soldier had so far relaxed the discipline of his army during one of the Northern campaigns that, one night, when his troops were all peacefully sleeping in their chariots, the camp was surrounded and burnt and his forces utterly routed, the punishment seems deserved. But Tu Fu thought otherwise, and so unwisely urged his opinion that the Emperor lost patience and ordered an investigation of Tu Fu's conduct. His friends, however, rallied to his defence and the investigation was quashed, but he was deprived of the censorship and sent to a minor position in Shensi. This he chose to regard as a punishment, as indeed it was. He proceeded to Shensi, but, on arriving there, dramatically refused to assume his office; having performed which act of bravado, he joined his family in Kansu. He found them in the greatest distress from famine, and although he did his best to keep them alive by going to the hills and gathering fire-wood to sell, and by digging up roots and various growing things for them to eat, several of his children died of starvation.

Another six months of minor officialdom in Hua Chou, and he retired to Ch'êngtu in Szechwan, where he lived in a grass-roofed house, engaged in study and the endeavour to make the two ends of nothing meet. At length, a friend of his arrived in Szechwan as Governor-General, and this friend appointed him a State Counsellor. But the grass-house was more to his taste than state councils, and after a year and a half he returned to it, and the multifarious wanderings which always punctuated his life.

Five years later, when he was fifty-five, he set off on one of his journeys, but was caught by floods and obliged to take refuge in a ruined temple at Hu Kuang, where he nearly starved before help could reach him. After ten days, he was rescued through the efforts of the local

magistrate, but eating again after so long a fast was fatal and he died within an hour.

Innumerable essays have been written comparing the styles of Li T'ai-po and Tu Fu. Yüan Chên, a poet of the T'ang period, says that Tu Fu's poems have perfect balance; that, if he wrote a thousand lines, the last would have as much vigour as the first and that no one can equal him in this, his poems make a "perfect circle." He goes on: "In my opinion, the great living wave of poetry and song in which Li T'ai-po excelled is surpassed in Tu Fu's work, he is shoulders higher than Li Po." Again: "The poems of Li T'ai-po are like Spring flowers, those of Tu Fu are like the pine-trees, they are eternal and fear neither snow nor cold."

Shên Ming-chên says: "Li Po is like the Spring grass, like Autumn waves, not a person but must love him. Tu Fu is like a great hill, a high peak, a long river, the broad sea, like fine grass and bright-coloured flowers, like a pine or an ancient fir, like moving wind and gentle waves, like heavy hoar-frost, like burning heat—not a quality is missing."

Hu Yu-ling uses a metaphor referring to casting dice and says that Li T'ai-po would owe Tu Fu "an ivory"; and Han Yü, speaking of both Li T'ai-po and Tu Fu, declares that "the flaming light of their essays would rise ten thousand feet."

Poetic as these criticisms are, it is their penetration which is so astonishing; but I think the most striking comparison made of Tu Fu's work is that by Tao Kai-yü: "Tu Fu's poems are like pictures, like the branches of trees reflected in water—the branches of still trees. Like a large group of houses seen through clouds or mist, they appear and disappear."

Sometime ago, in a review of a volume of translations of Chinese poetry in the *London Times*, I came across this remarkable statement: "The Chinese poet starts talking in the most ordinary language and voices the most ordinary things, and his poetry seems to happen suddenly out of the commonplace as if it were some beautiful action happening in the routine of actual life."

The critic could have had no knowledge of the Chinese language, as nothing can be farther from the truth than his observation. It is largely a fact that the Oriental poet finds his themes in the ordinary affairs of everyday life, but he describes them in a very special, carefully chosen, medium. The simplest child's primer is written in a language never used in speaking, while the most highly educated scholar would never dream of employing the same phrases in conversation which he would make use of were he writing an essay, a poem, or a state document. Each language—the spoken, the poetic, the literary, the documentary—has its own construction, its own class of characters, and its own symbolism. A translator must therefore make a special study of whichever he wishes to render.

Although several great sinologues have written on the subject of Chinese poetry, none, so far as I am aware, has devoted his exclusive attention to the poetic style, nor has any translator availed himself of the assistance, so essential to success, of a poet—that is, one trained in the art of seizing the poetic values in fine shades of meaning. Without this power, which amounts to an instinct, no one can hope to reproduce any poetry in another tongue, and how much truer this is of Chinese poetry can only be realized by those who have some knowledge of the language. Such poets, on the other hand, as have been moved to make beautiful renditions of Chinese originals have been hampered by inadequate translations. It is impossible to expect that even a scholar thoroughly versed in the philological aspects of Chinese literature can, at the same time, be endowed with enough of the poetic *flair* to convey, uninjured, the thoughts of one poet to another. A second personality obtrudes between poet and poet, and the contact, which must be established between the two minds if any adequate translation is to result, is broken. How Miss Lowell and I have endeavoured to obviate this rupture of the poetic current, I shall explain presently. But, to understand it, another factor in the case must first be understood.

It cannot be too firmly insisted upon that the Chinese character itself plays a considerable part in Chinese poetic composition. Calligraphy and poetry are mixed up together in the Chinese mind. How close this intermingling may be, will appear when we come to speak of the "Written Pictures," but even without following the interdependence of these arts to the point where they merge into one, it must not be forgotten that Chinese is an ideographic, or picture, language. These marvellous collections of brush-strokes which we call Chinese characters are really separate pictographic representations of complete thoughts. Complex characters are not spontaneously composed, but are built up of simple characters, each having its own peculiar meaning and usage; these, when used in combination, each play their part in modifying either the sense or the sound of the complex. Now it must not be thought that these separate entities make an over-loud noise in the harmony of the whole character. They are each subdued to the total result, the final meaning, but they do produce a qualifying effect upon the word itself. Since Chinese characters are complete ideas, it is convenient to be able to express the various degrees of these ideas by special characters which shall have those exact meanings; it is, therefore, clear that to grasp a poet's full intention in a poem there must be a knowledge of the analysis of characters.

This might seem bizarre, were it not for a striking proof to the contrary. It is a fact that many of the Chinese characters have become greatly altered during the centuries since they were invented. So long ago as A.D. 200, a scholar named Hsu Shih, realizing that this alteration was taking place, wrote the dictionary known as "Shuo Wen Chieh Tzū," or "Speech and Writing: Characters Untied," containing about ten thousand characters in their primitive and final forms. This work is on the desk of every scholar in the Far East and is studied with the greatest reverence. Many editions have appeared since it was written, and by its aid one can trace the genealogy of characters in the most complete manner. Other volumes of the same kind

have followed in its wake, showing the importance of the subject in Chinese estimation. While translators are apt to ignore this matter of character genealogy, it is ever present to the mind of the Chinese poet or scholar who is familiar with the original forms; indeed, he may be said to find his overtones in the actual composition of the character he is using.

All words have their connotations, but this is connotation and more; it is a pictorial representation of something implied, and, lacking which, an effect would be lost. It may be objected that poems were heard as well as read, and that, when heard, the composition of the character must be lost. But I think this is to misunderstand the situation. Recollect, for a moment, the literary examinations, and consider that educated men had these characters literally ground into them. Merely to pronounce a word must be, in such a case, to see it and realize, half-unconsciously perhaps, its various parts. Even if half-unconscious, the *nuances* of meaning conveyed by them must have hung about the spoken word and given it a distinct flavour which, without them, would be absent.

Now what is a translator to do? Shall he render the word in the flat, dictionary sense, or shall he permit himself to add to it what it conveys to an educated Chinese? Clearly neither the one nor the other in all cases; but one or the other, which the context must determine. In description, for instance, where it is evident that the Chinese poet used every means at his command to achieve a vivid representation, I believe the original poem is more nearly reproduced by availing one's self of a minimum of these "split-ups"; where, on the other hand, the original carefully confines itself to simple and direct expression, the word as it is, without overtones, must certainly be preferred. The "split-ups" in these translations are few, but could our readers compare the original Chinese with Miss Lowell's rendition of it, in these instances, I think they would feel with me that in no other way could the translation have been made really "literal," could the poem be "brought over" in its entirety. If a translation of a poem is

not poetry in its new tongue, the original has been shorn of its chief reason for being. Something is always lost in a translation, but that something had better be the trappings than the essence.

I must, however, make it quite clear how seldom these "split-ups" occur in the principal parts of the book; in the "Written Pictures," where the poems were not, most of them, classics, we felt justified in making a fuller use of these analytical suggestions; but I believe I am correct in saying that no translations from the Chinese that I have read are so near to the originals as these. Bear in mind, then, that there are not, I suppose, more than a baker's dozen of these "split-ups" throughout the book, and the way they were managed can be seen by this literal translation of a line in "The Terraced Road of the Two-Edged Sword Mountains." The Chinese words are on the left, the English words on the right, the analyses of the characters enclosed in brackets:

Shang	Above
Tsè	Then
Sung	Pines
Féng	Wind
Hsiao	Whistling wind (Grass—meaning the sound of wind through grass, to whistle; and in awe of, or to venerate.)
Sè	Gusts of wind (Wind; and to stand.)
Sè	A psaltery (Two strings of jade-stones which are sonorous.)
Yü	Wind in a gale (Wind; and to speak.)

Miss Lowell's rendering of the line was:

On their heights, the wind whistles awesomely in the pines; if booms in great, long gusts; it clashes like the strings of a jade-stone psaltery; it shouts on the clearness of a gale.

Can any one doubt that this was just the effect that the Chinese poet wished to achieve, and did achieve by means of the overtones given in his characters?

Another, simpler, example is in a case where the Chinese poet speaks of a rising

sun. There are many characters which denote sunrise, and each has some shade of difference from every other. In one, the analysis is the sunrise light seen from a boat through mist; in another, it is the sun just above the horizon; still another is made up of a period of time and a mortar, meaning that it is dawn, when people begin to work. But the poet chose none of these; instead, he chose a character which analyzes into the sun at the height of a helmeted man, and so Miss Lowell speaks of the sun as "head-high," and we have the very picture the poet wanted us to see.

Miss Lowell has told in the Preface the manner in which we worked. The papers sent to Miss Lowell were in exactly the form of the above, and with them I also sent a paraphrase, and notes such as those at the end of this book. Far from making the slightest attempt at literary form in these paraphrases, I deliberately made them as bald as possible, and strove to keep my personality from intruding between Miss Lowell and the Chinese poet with whose mood she must be in perfect sympathy. Her remarkable gift for entering into the feeling of the poet she is translating was first shown in "Six French Poets," but there she approached her authors at first hand. It was my object to enable her to approach these Chinese authors as nearly at first hand as I could. That my method has been justified by the event, the book shows; not merely are these translations extraordinarily exact, they are poetry, and would be so though no Chinese poet had conceived them fourteen hundred years ago. It is as if I had handed her the warp and the woof, the silver threads and the gold, and from these she has woven a brocade as nearly alike in pattern to that designed by the Chinese poet as the differences in the looms permit. I believe that this is the first time that English translations of Chinese poetry have been made by a student of Chinese and a poet working together. Our experience of the partnership has taught us both much; if we are pioneers in such a collaboration, we only hope that others will follow our lead.

The second section of the book,

"Written Pictures," consists of illustrations, or half illustrations, of an art which the Chinese consider the most perfect medium in which a man can express himself. These *Tzū Hua*, "Hanging-on-the-Wall Poems," are less known and understood than any other form of Oriental art. A beautiful thought perpetuated in beautiful handwriting and hung upon the wall to suggest a mental picture—that is what it amounts to.

In China, the arts of poetry and calligraphy are united in the ideographs which form the written language. There are several different styles in which these ideographs, or characters, may be written. The earliest are pictograms known as the "ancient pictorial script"; they were superseded in the Eighth Century *a.c.* by the "great seal" characters and later by the "lesser seal." These, which had been executed with the "knife pen," were practically given up when the invention of the writing-brush, which is usually translated as "pencil," revolutionized calligraphy (*circa* 215 *b.c.*). Their place was taken by a type of character known as *li* or "official script," a simplified form of the "seal," and this, being an improvement upon all previous styles, soon became popular. It created almost a new character in which the pictorial element had largely disappeared, and, with certain modifications, holds good to-day. The "model hand," the "running hand," and the famous "grass hand," so popular with poets and painters, are merely adaptations of the *li*; all three of these, together with the *li* itself, are used in the composition of written pictures.

The written pictures here translated were formerly in the possession of a Chinese gentleman of keenly aesthetic taste, and are excellent examples of the art. The names which follow the poems are not those of the authors, but of the calligraphists. In the case of two poems, the authors' names are also given. These written pictures had no titles, those given here were added simply for convenience; but the titles to the poems in the body of the book are those of the poets themselves, except in one or two instances where the Chinese title conveyed so little

to an Occidental mind that its meaning had to be paraphrased.

The Notes at the end of the book are intended for the general reader. For which reason, I have purposely excluded the type of note which consists in cataloguing literary cross-allusions. To know that certain lines in a poem are quoted from some earlier author, one of a class of facts which deeply interest scholars, but are of no importance whatever to the rest of the world.

A word as to the title of this book: There lived at Ch'êng-tu, the capital of Szechwan, early in the Ninth Century, a courtesan named Hsieh T'ao, who was famous for her wit and verse-writing. Hsieh T'ao made a paper of ten colours, which she dipped in a stream, and on it wrote her poems. Now, some years before, a woman had taken the stole of a Buddhist priest to this stream in order to wash it. No sooner had the stole touched the water than the stream became filled with flowers. In an old Chinese book, "The Treasury of Pleasant Records," it is told that, later in life, Hsieh T'ao gave up the "fir-flower tablets" and made paper of a smaller size. Presumably this fir-flower paper was the paper of ten colours. The mountain stream which ran near Hsieh T'ao's house is called the "Hundred Flower Stream."

I cannot close this Introduction without expressing my gratitude to my teacher, Mr. Nung Chu. It is his unflagging interest and never-failing patience that have kept me spurred on to my task. Speaking no word of English, Mr. Nung must often have found my explanations of what would, and what would not, be comprehensible to Occidental readers very difficult to understand, and my only regret is that he cannot read the book now that it is done.

FLORENCE AYSOUGH

SONGS OF THE MARCHES BY LI T'AI-PO

I

It is the Fifth Month,
But still the Heaven-high hills
Shine with snow.
There are no flowers

For the heart of the earth is yet too
chilly,
From the centre of the camp
Comes the sound of a flute
Playing "The Snapped Willow."
No colour mists the trees,
Not yet have their leaves broken.
At dawn, there is the shock and shouting
of battle,
Following the drums and the loud metal
gongs.
At night, the soldiers sleep, clasping
the pommels of their jade-ornamented
saddles.
They sleep lightly,
With their two-edged swords girt below
their loins,
So that they may be able in an instant
to rush upon the Barbarians
And destroy them.

II

Horses!
Horses!
Swift as the three dogs' wind!
Whips stinging the clear air like the
sharp calling of birds,
They ride across the camel-back bridge
Over the river Wei.
They bend the bows,
Curving them away from the moon
which shines behind them
Over their own country of Han.
They fasten feathers on their arrows
To destroy the immense arrogance of the
foe.
Now the regiments are divided
And scattered like the five-pointed stars,
Sea mist envelops the deserted camp,
The task is accomplished,
And the portrait of Ho P'iao Yao
Hangs magnificently in the Lin Pavilion.

III

When Autumn burns along the hills,
The Barbarian hordes mount their horses
And pour down from the North.
Then, in the country of Han,
The Heavenly soldiers arise
And depart from their homes.
The High General
Divides the tiger tally.
Fight, Soldiers!

Then lie down and rest
On the Dragon sand.
The frontier moon casts the shadows of
bows upon the ground,
Swords brush the hoar-frost flowers of
the Barbarians' country.
The Jade Pass has not yet been forced,
Our soldiers hold it strongly.
Therefore the young married women
May cease their lamentations.

IV

The Heavenly soldiers are returning
From the sterile plains of the North.
Because the Barbarians desired their horses
To drink of the streams of the South,
Therefore were our spears held level to
the charge
In a hundred fights.
In straight battle our soldiers fought
To gain the supreme gratitude
Of the Most High Emperor.
They seized the snow of the Inland Sea
And devoured it in their terrible hunger.
They lay on the sand at the top of the
Dragon Mound
And slept.
All this they bore that the Moon Clan
Might be destroyed.
Now indeed have they won the right
To the soft, high bed of Peace.
It is their just portion.

THE BATTLE TO THE SOUTH
OF THE CITY

BY LI T'AI-PO

How dim the battle-field, as yellow dusk!
The fighting men are like a swarm of
ants.
The air is thick, the sun a red wheel.
Blood dyes the wild chrysanthemums
purple.
Vultures hold the flesh of men in their
mouths,
They are heavy with food — they cannot
rise to fly.
There were men yesterday on the city
wall;
There are ghosts to-day below the city
wall.
Colours of flags like a net of stars,
Rolling of horse-carried drums — not yet
is the killing ended.

From the house of the Unworthy One
— a husband, sons,
All within earshot of the rolling horse-
drums.

THE PERILS OF THE SHU ROAD

BY LI T'AI-PO

Alas! Alas! The danger! The steepness!
O Affliction!
The Shu Road is as perilous and difficult
as the way to the Green Heavens.
No greater undertaking than this has
been since Ts'an Ts'ung and Yü Fu
ruled the land.
For forty-eight thousand years no man
had passed the boundary of Ch'in.
Westward, over the Great White Moun-
tain, was a bird-track
By which one could cross to the peak of
Omei.
But the earth of the mountain fell and
overwhelmed the Heroes so that they
perished.
Afterwards, therefore, they made sky-
ladders and joined the cliffs with hang-
ing pathways.
Above, the soaring tips of the high moun-
tains hold back the six dragons of the sun;
Below, in the ravines, the flowing waters
break into whirlpools and swirl back
against the current.
Yellow geese flying toward the peaks
cannot pass over them;
The gibbons climb and climb, despair-
ingly pulling themselves up higher and
higher, but even their endurance fails.
How the road coils and coils through the
Green Mud Pass!
With nine turns to a hundred steps, it
winds round the ledges of the moun-
tain crests.
Clutching at Orion, passing the Well
Star, I look up and gasp.
I sit long with my hand pressed to my
heart and groan.
I ask my Lord how long this Westward
wandering will last, when we shall
return.
It is impossible to climb the terrible road
along the edges of the precipices.
Among the ancient trees, one sees only
cruel, mournful, black birds.
Male birds, followed by females, fly to
and fro through the woods.

Sometimes one hears a nightingale in
the melancholy moonlight of the lonely
mountain.

The Shu Road is as perilous and difficult
as the way to the Green Heavens.
The ruddy faces of those who hear the
story of it turn pale.

There is not a cubit's space between the
mountain tops and the sky.

Dead and uprooted pine-trees hang over
sheer cliffs.

Flying waterfalls and rolling torrents out-
do one another in clamour and con-
fusion;

They dash against the perpendicular
walls, whirl round ten thousand rocks,
and boom like thunder along the
ravines.

This is what the Two-Edged Sword
Mountains are like!

Alas! How endless a road for man to
undertake! How came he to attempt
it!

The Terraced Road of the Two-Edged
Sword twists between glittering and
rocky summits.

One man alone could hold it against a
thousand and mow them down like
grass.

If the guardian of the Pass were doubtful
whether those who came were enemies
of his kinsmen,

He could fall upon them as a ravening
wolf.

At dawn, one flees the fierce tigers;
In the evening, one flees the long
snakes

Who sharpen their fangs and suck blood,
Destroying men like hemp.

Even though the delights of the Em-
broided City are as reported,

Nothing could equal the joy of going
home at once.

The Shu Road is as perilous and difficult
as the way to the Green Heavens.

I turn toward the West, and, gazing
long, I sigh.

LOOKING AT THE MOON AFTER RAIN

BY LI T'AI-PO

The heavy clouds are broken and blow-
ing,

And once more I can see the wide com-

mon stretching beyond the four sides
of the city.
Open the door. Half of the moon-toad
is already up,
The glimmer of it is like smooth hoar-
frost spreading over ten thousand li.
The river is a flat, shining chain.
The moon, rising, is a white eye to the
hills;
After it has risen, it is the bright heart
of the sea.
Because I love it — so — round as a fan,
I hum songs until the dawn.

THE LONELY WIFE

BY LI T'AI-PO

The mist is thick. On the wide river,
the water-plants float smoothly.
No letters come; none go.
There is only the moon, shining through
the clouds of a hard, jade-green sky,
Looking down at us so far divided, so
anxiously apart.
All day, going about my affairs, I suffer
and grieve, and press the thought of
you closely to my heart.
My eyebrows are locked in sorrow, I
cannot separate them.
Nightly, nightly, I keep ready half the
quilt,
And wait for the return of that divine
dream which is my Lord.

Beneath the quilt of the Fire-Bird, on
the bed of the Silver-Crested Love-
Pheasant,
Nightly, nightly, I drowse alone.
The red candles in the silver candlesticks
melt, and the wax runs from them.
As the tears of your so Unworthy One
escape and continue constantly to flow.
A flower face endures but a short season,
Yet still he drifts along the river Hsiao
and the river Hsiang.
As I toss on my pillow, I hear the cold
nostalgic sound of the water-clock:
Shêng! Shêng! it drips, cutting my heart
in two.

I rise at dawn. In the Hall of Pictures
They come and tell me that the snow-
flowers are falling.

The reed-blind is rolled high, and I gaze
at the beautiful, glittering, primeval
snow,
Whitening the distance, confusing the
stone steps and the courtyard.
The air is filled with its shining, it blows
far out like the smoke of a furnace.
The grass-blades are cold and white, like
jade girdle pendants.
Surely the Immortals in Heaven must be
crazy with wine to cause such disorder,
Seizing the white clouds, crumpling them
up, destroying them.

THE PLEASURES WITHIN
THE PALACE

BY LI T'AI-PO

From little, little girls, they have lived
in the Golden House.
They are lovely, lovely, in the Purple
Hall.
They dress their hair with hill flowers,
And rock-bamboos are embroidered on
their dresses of open-work silk gauze.
When they go out from the retired
Women's Apartments,
They often follow the Palace chairs.
Their only sorrow, that the songs and wu
dances are over,
Changed into the five-coloured clouds
and flown away.

THE YOUNG GIRLS OF YUEH

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

Young girls are gathering lotus-seeds on
the pond of Ya.
Seeing a man on the bank, they turn and
row away singing.
Laughing, they hide among the lotus-
flowers.
And, in a pretence of bashfulness, will
not come out.

II

Many of the young girls of Wu are
white, dazzlingly white.
They like to amuse themselves by float-
ing in little boats on the water.

Peeping out of the corners of their eyes,
they spurn the Springtime heart.
Gathering flowers, they ridicule the
passer-by.

WRITTEN IN THE CHARACTER
OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
GRIEVING BEFORE HER
MIRROR

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

Bright, bright, the gilded magpie mirror,
Absolutely perfect in front of me on the
jade dressing-stand.
Wiped, rubbed, splendid as the Winter
moon;
Its light and brilliance, how clear and
round!
The rose-red face is older than it was
yesterday,
The hair is whiter than it was last
year.
The white-lead powder is neglected,
It is useless to look into the mirror. I
am utterly miserable.

II

When my Lord went away, he gave
me this precious mirror coiled with
dragons
That I might gaze at my golden-threaded
dress of silken gauze.
Again and again I take my red sleeve
and polish the bright moon,
Because I love to see its splendour light-
ing up everything.
In its centre is my reflection, and the
golden magpie which does not fly
away.
I sit at my dressing-stand, and I am like
the green Fire-Bird who, thinking of
its mate, died alone.
My husband is parted from me as an
arrow from the bow-string.
I know the day he left; I do not know
the year when he will return.
The cruel wind blows — truly the heart
of the Unworthy One is cut to pieces.
My tears, like white jade chop-sticks, fall
in a single piece before the water-
chestnut mirror.

SONGS TO THE PEONIES
SUNG TO THE AIR:
"PEACEFUL BRIGHTNESS"

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

The many-coloured clouds make me
think of her upper garments, of her
lower garments;
Flowers make me think of her face.
The Spring wind brushes the blossoms
against the balustrade,
In the heavy dew they are bright and
tinted diversely.
If it were not on the Heaped Jade Moun-
tain that I saw her,
I must have met her at the Green Jasper
Terrace, or encountered her by acci-
dent in the moon.

II

A branch of opulent, beautiful flowers,
sweet-scented under frozen dew.
No love-night like that on the Sorceress
Mountain for these; their bowels ache
in vain.
Pray may I ask who, in the Palace of
Han, is her equal?
Even the "Flying Swallow" is to be
pitied, since she must rely upon ever
new adornments.

III

The renowned flower, and she of a love-
liness to overthrow Kingdoms — both
give happiness.
Each receives a smile from the Prince
when he looks at them.
The Spring wind alone can understand
and explain the boundless jealousy of
the flower,
Leaning over the railing of the balcony
at the North side of the aloe-wood
pavilion.

SPRING GRIEF AND
RESENTMENT

BY LI T'AI-PO

There is a white horse with a gold bridle
to the East of the Liao Sea.
Bed-curtains of open-work silk — em-

broidered quilt—I sleep with the
Spring wind.
The setting moon drops level to the
balcony, it spies upon me. The candle
is burnt out.
A blown flower drifts in through the
inner door—it mocks at the empty
bed.

THE CAST-OFF PALACE WOMAN
OF CH'IN
AND THE DRAGON ROBES
BY LI T'AI-PO

At Wei Yang dwells the Son of Heaven.
The all Unworthy One attends beside
The Dragon-broidered robes.
I ponder his regard, not mine the love
Enjoyed by those within the Purple
Palace.
And yet I have attained to brightening
The bed of yellow gold.
If floods should come, I also would not
leave.
A bear might come and still I could
protect.
My inconsiderable body knows the honour
Of serving Sun and Moon.
I flicker with a little glow of light,
A firefly's. I beg my Lord to pluck
The trifling mustard plant and melon-
flower
And not reject them for their hidden
roots.

THE POET IS DETAINED IN A
NANKING WINE-SHOP ON
THE EVE OF STARTING
ON A JOURNEY
BY LI T'AI-PO

The wind blows. The inn is filled with
the scent of willow-flowers.
In the wine-shops of Wu, women are
pressing the wine. The sight invites
customers to taste.
The young men and boys of Nanking
have gathered to see me off;
I wish to start, but I do not, and we
drink many, many horn cups to the
bottom.
I beg them to look at the water flowing
toward the East,

And when we separate to let their
thoughts follow its example and run
constantly in my direction.

FENG HUANG T'AI
ASCENDING THE TERRACE OF
THE SILVER-CRESTED LOVE-
PHEASANTS AT THE CITY
OF THE GOLDEN MOUND

BY LI T'AI-PO

The silver-crested love-pheasants strutted
upon the Pheasant Terrace.
Now the pheasants are gone, the terrace
is empty, and the river flows on its old,
original way.
Gone are the blossoms of the Palace of
Wu and overgrown the road to it.
Passed the generations of the Chin, with
their robes and head-dresses; they lie
beneath the ancient mounds.

The three hills are half fallen down from
Green Heaven.
The White Heron Island cuts the river in
two.
Here also, drifting clouds may blind the
Sun,
One cannot see Ch'ang An, City of Eter-
nal Peace.
Therefore am I sorrowful.

THE NORTHERN FLIGHT
BY LI T'AI-PO

What hardships are encountered in a
Northern flight!
We fly Northward, ascending the T'ai
Hang Mountains.
The mountain road winds round a cliff,
and it is very steep and dangerous;
The precipice, sheer as though cut with
a knife, rises to the great, wide blue of
the sky.
The horses' feet slip on the slanting
ledges;
The carriage-wheels are broken on the
high ridges;
The sand, scuffed into dust, floats in a
continuous line to Yo Chou.
The smoke of beacon fires connects us
with the Country of the North.

The spirit of killing is in the spears, in
the cruel two-edged swords.
The savage wind rips open the upper garments,
the lower garments.
The rushing whale squeezes the Yellow
River;
The man-eating beasts with long tusks
assemble at Lo Yang.

We press forward with no knowledge of
when we shall return;
We look back, thinking of our former
home;
Grieving and lamenting in the midst of
ice and snow;
Grooming aloud, with our bowels rent
asunder.
A foot of cloth does not cover the body,
Our skins are cracked as the bark of a
dead mulberry.
The deep gullies prevent us from getting
water from the mountain streams,
Far away are the slopes where we might
gather grass and twigs for our fires,
Then, too, the terrible tiger lashes his
tail,
And his polished teeth glitter like
Autumn frosts.
Grass and trees cannot be eaten.
We famish; we drink the drops of freezing
dew.
Alas! So we suffer, travelling Northward.
I stop my four-horse carriage, overcome
by misery.
When will our Emperor find a peaceful
road?
When, before our glad faces, shall we
see the Glory of Heaven?

FIGHTING TO THE SOUTH OF THE CITY

BY LI T'AI-PO

Last year they fought at the source of the
Sang Ch'ien,
This year they fight on the road by the
Leek-green River.
The soldiers were drenched by the waters
of the Aral Sea,
The horses were turned loose to find grass
in the midst of the snows of the
Heaven High Hills.
Over ten thousand li, they attacked and
fought,

The three divisions are crumbled, decayed,
utterly worn and old
The Hsiung Nu use killing and slaughter
in the place of the business of plowing.
From ancient times, only dry, white
bones are seen on the yellow sand-
fields.

The House of Ch'in erected and pounded
firm the wall to make a barrier before
the dwelling-place of the Barbarians,
The House of Han still preserved the
beacon-stands where fires are lighted.
The lighting of beacon fires on the stands
never ceases,

The fighting and attacking are without a
time of ending.

In savage attack they die — fighting with-
out arms.

The riderless horses scream with terror,
throwing their heads up to the sky.

Vultures and kites tear the bowels of
men with their beaks

And fly to hang them on the branches of
dead trees.

Officers and soldiers lying in mud, in
grass, in undergrowth.

Helpless, the General — Yes, incapable
before this!

We have learnt that soldiers are evil
tools,

But wise men have not accomplished the
ending of war, and still we employ
them.

THE CROSSWISE RIVER

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

There are people who say the Crosswise
River is good;

I say the Crosswise River is terrible.

The savage wind blows as if it would
overturn the Heaven's Gate Mountains.

The white waves are as high as the high
rooms in the Temple of Wa Kuan.

II

The sea tide flowing Southward passes
Hsün Yang.

From the beginning of things, the Ox
Ledge has been more dangerous than
the Standing Horse Hill.

Those who wish to cross the Crosswise
River
Find evil winds and waves.
The misery of that one stretch of water
draws out its length to ten thousand li.

III

When the Sea Demon passes by, a
vicious wind curves back.
The waves beat open the rock wall of
the Gate of Heaven.
Is the Eighth Month tide-bore of Chè-
kiang equal to this?
It seems as though the vast, booming
waves were part of the mountains —
they spurt out snow.

ON HEARING THE BUDDHIST
PRIEST OF SHU PLAY HIS
TABLE-LUTE

BY LI T'AI-PO

The Priest of the Province of Shu, car-
rying his table-lute in a cover of green,
shot silk,
Comes down the Western slope of the
peak of Mount Omei.
He moves his hands for me, striking the
lute.
It is like listening to the waters in ten
thousand ravines, and the wind in ten
thousand pine-trees.
The traveller's heart is washed clean as
in flowing water.
The echoes of the overtones join with the
evening bell.
I am not conscious of the sunset behind
the jade-grey hill,
Nor how many and dark are the Autumn
clouds.

CH'ANG KAN

BY LI T'AI-PO

When the hair of your Unworthy One
first began to cover her forehead,
She picked flowers and played in front
of the door.
Then you, my Lover, came riding a bam-
boo horse.
We ran round and round the bed, and
tossed about the sweetmeats of green
plums.

We both lived in the village of Ch'ang
Kan.

We were both very young, and knew
neither jealousy nor suspicion.

At fourteen, I became the wife of my
Lord.

I could not yet lay aside my face of
shame;

I hung my head, facing the dark wall;
You might call me a thousand times, not
once would I turn round.

At fifteen, I stopped frowning.
I wanted to be with you, as dust with its
ashes.

I often thought that you were the faith-
ful man who clung to the bridge-
post.

That I should never be obliged to ascend
to the Looking-for-Husband Ledge.

When I was sixteen, my Lord went far
away.

To the Ch'ü T'ang Chasm and the Whirl-
ing Water Rock of the Yü River

Which, during the Fifth Month, must
not be collided with;

Where the wailing of the gibbons seems
to come from the sky.

Your departing footprints are still before
the door where I bade you good-bye.

In each has sprung up green moss.
The moss is thick, it cannot be swept
away.

The leaves are falling, it is early for the
Autumn wind to blow.

It is the Eighth Month, the butterflies
are yellow,

Two are flying among the plants in the
West garden;

Seeing them, my heart is bitter with grief,
they wound the heart of the Unworthy
One.

The bloom of my face has faded, sitting
with my sorrow.

From early morning until late in the
evening, you descend the Three Ser-
pent River.

Prepare me first with a letter, bringing
me the news of when you will reach
home.

I will not go far on the road to meet
you.

I will go straight until I reach the Long
Wind Sands.

SORROW DURING A CLEAR
AUTUMN

BY LI T'AI-PO

I climb the hills of Chiu I — Oh-h-h-h-h!
 I look at the clear streams a long way
 off.
 I see distinctly the three branches of the
 Hsiang River, I hear the sound of its
 swift current.
 The water flows coldly; it is on its way to
 the lake.
 The horizontal Autumn clouds hide the
 sky.
 I go by the "Bird's Path." I calculate the
 distance to my old home. Oh-h-h-h-h!
 I do not know how many thousand *li* it
 is from Ching to Wu.
 It is the hour of the Western brightness,
 of the half-round sun.
 The dazzle on the island is about to dis-
 appear;
 The smooth lake is brilliantly white —
 from the moon?
 Over the lake, the moon is rising.
 I think of the moment of meeting —
 the long stretch of time before it.
 I think of misty Yen and gaze at Yieh.
 The lotus-flowers have fallen — Oh-h-h-
 h-h! The river is the colour of
 Autumn.
 The wind passes — passes. The night is
 endless — endless.
 I would go to the end of the Dark Sea.
 How eagerly I desire this!
 I think much of fishing for a leviathan
 from the Island of the Cold Sea.
 There is no rod long enough to raise it.
 I yield to the great waves, and my sor-
 row is increased.
 I will return. I will go home. Oh-h-h-h-h!
 Even for a little time, one cannot rely
 upon the World.
 I long to pick the immortal herbs on the
 hill of P'eng.

POIGNANT GRIEF DURING A
SUNNY SPRING

BY LI T'AI-PO

The East wind has come again.
 I see the jade-green grass and realize that
 it is Spring.

Everywhere there is an immense confu-
 sion of ripples and agitations.
 Why does the waving and fluttering of
 the weeping-willow make me sad?
 The sky is so bright it shines; everything
 is lovely and at peace.
 The breath of the sea is green, fresh,
 sweet-smelling;
 The heaths are vari-coloured, blue —
 green — as a kingfisher feather. Oh-h-
 h-h-h — How far one can see!
 Clouds whirl, fly, float, and cluster to-
 gether, each one sharply defined;
 Waves are smoothed into a wide contin-
 uous flowing.
 I examine the young moss in the well,
 how it starts into life.
 I see something dim — Oh-h-h-h-h —
 waving up and down like floss silk.
 I see it floating — it is a cobweb, coil-
 ing like smoke.
 Before all these things — Oh-h-h-h-h —
 my soul is severed from my body.
 Confronted with the wind, the brilliance,
 I suffer.
 I feel as one feels listening to the sound
 of the waters of the Dragon Mound in
 Ch'in,
 The gibbons wailing by the Serpent
 River.
 I feel as the "Shining One" felt when
 she passed the Jade Frontier,
 As the exile of Ch'u in the Maple Forest.
 I will try to climb a high hill and look
 far away into the distance.
 Pain cuts me to the bone and wounds
 my heart.
 My Spring heart is agitated as the surface
 of the sea,
 My Spring grief is bewildered like a flurry
 of snow.
 Ten thousand emotions are mingled —
 their sorrow and their joy.
 Yet I know only that my heart is torn in
 this Spring season,
 She of whom I am thinking — Oh-h-h-
 h-h — is at the shore of the Hsiang
 River,
 Separated by the clouds and the rainbow
 — without these mists I could surely
 see.
 I scatter my tears a foot's length upon
 the water's surface.
 I entrust the Easterly flowing water with
 my passion for the Cherished One.

If I could command the shining of the
Spring, could grasp it without putting
it out — Oh-h-h-h —
I should wish to send it as a gift to that
beautiful person at the border of
Heaven.

TWO POEMS WRITTEN AS
PARTING GIFTS TO 'TS'UI
(THE OFFICIAL) OF
CH'IU PU

BY LI T'AI-PO

I love 'Ts'ui of Ch'in Pu.
He follows the ways of the Official T'ao.
At his gate, he has planted five willow-
trees,
And on either side of the well, crowding
it between them, stand two wu-t'ung
trees.
Mountain birds fly down and listen while
he transacts business;
From the eaves of his house, flowers drop
into the midst of his wine.
Thinking of my Lord, I cannot bear to
depart.
My thoughts are melancholy and endless.

II

My Lord is like T'ao of P'êng Tsè.
Often, during the day, he sleeps at the
North window.
Again, in the moonlight, he bends over
his table-lute and plays,
His hands follow his thoughts, for there
are no strings.
When a guest comes, it is wine alone
which he pours out.
He is the best of officials, since he does
not care for gold.
He has planted many grains on the East-
ern heights,
And he admonishes all the people to
plow their fields early.

SENT AS A PARTING GIFT TO
THE SECOND OFFICIAL OF
CH'IU PU

BY LI T'AI-PO

In the old days, Ch'iu Pu was bare and
desolate,
The serving-men in the Official Residence
were few

Because you, my Lord, have planted
peach-trees and plum-trees,
This place has suddenly become exuber-
antly fragrant.
As your writing-brush moves, making the
characters so full of life, you gaze at
the white clouds;
And, when the reed-blinds are rolled up,
at the kingfisher-green of the fading
hills;
And, when the time comes, for long at
the mountain moon;
Still again, when you are exhilarated with
wine, at the shadow of the moon in
the wine-cup.
Great man and teacher, I love you.
I linger.
I cannot bear to leave.

THE SONG OF THE
WHITE CLOUDS
SAYING GOOD-BYE TO LIU
SIXTEEN ON HIS RETURN
TO THE HILLS

BY LI T'AI-PO

The hills of Ch'u,
The hills of Ch'in,
White clouds everywhere.
White clouds follow my Lord always,
From place to place. They always follow
My Lord,
When my Lord arrives at the hills of
Ch'u.
Clouds also follow my Lord when he
floats
In a boat on the river Hsiang.
With the wild wistaria hanging above
The waters of the river Hsiang
My Lord will go back
To where he can sleep
Among the white clouds,
When the sun is as high
As the head of a helmeted man

WIND-BOUND AT THE NEW
FOREST REACH.
A LETTER SENT TO A FRIEND

BY LI T'AI-PO

Tidal water is a determined thing, it can
be depended on;
But it is impossible to make an appoint-
ment with the wind of Heaven.

In the clear dawn, it veers Northwest;
At the last moment of sunset, it blows
Southeast.

It is therefore difficult to set our sail.
The thought of our happy meeting be-
comes insistent.

The wide water reflects a moon no longer
round, but broken.

Water grass springs green in the broad
reach.

Yesterday, at the North Lake, there were
plum-flowers;

They were just beginning to open, the
branches were not covered.

To-day, at dawn, see the willows beyond
the White Gate;

The road is squeezed between them, they
drop down their bright green silk
threads.

Everything stirs like this, with the year —
When will my coming be fixed?

Willow-blossoms lie thick as snow on
the river,

I am worried, the heart of the traveller is
sad.

"At daybreak I will leave the New Forest
Reach" —

But what is the use of humming Hsieh
T'iao's poem.

IN THE PROVINCE OF LU,
AT THE ANCESTRAL SHRINE
OF KING YAO.
SAYING FAREWELL TO WU FIVE
ON HIS DEPARTURE FOR
LANG YA

BY LI T'AI-PO

King Yao has been dead for three thou-
sand years,

But the green pine, the ancient temple,
remain.

As we are bidding you good-bye, we set
out offerings of cassia wine;

We make obeisance, we bend our knees,
and, rising, turn our faces to Heaven.

Our hearts and spirits are pure.
The colour of the sun urges our return.

Song follows song, we tip up the flagon
of sweet-scented wine.

The horses whinny. We are all tipsy,
yet we rise.

Our hands separate. What words are
there still to say?

• DRINKING ALONE IN THE
MOONLIGHT

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

A pot of wine among flowers.

I alone, drinking, without a companion,
I lift the cup and invite the bright moon.

My shadow opposite certainly makes us
three.

But the moon cannot drink,
And my shadow follows the motions of
my body in vain.

For the briefest time are the moon and
my shadow my companions.

Oh, be joyful! One must make the most
of Spring.

I sing — the moon walks forward rhyth-
mically;

I dance, and my shadow shatters and be-
comes confused.

In my waking moments, we are happily
blended.

When I am drunk, we are divided from
one another and scattered.

For a long time I shall be obliged to
wander without intention;

But we will keep our appointment by the
far-off Cloudy River.

DRINKING ALONE IN THE
MOONLIGHT

BY LI T'AI-PO

II

If Heaven did not love wine,
There would be no Wine Star in Heaven.

If Earth did not love wine,
There should be no Wine Springs on
Earth.

Why then be ashamed before Heaven to
love wine.

I have heard that clear wine is like the
Sages;

Again it is said that thick wine is like
the Virtuous Worthies.

Wherefore it appears that we have swal-
lowed both Sages and Worthies.

Why should we strive to be Gods and
Immortals?

Three cups, and one can perfectly under-
stand the Great Tao;

A gallon, and one is in accord with all
nature.
*Only those in the midst of it can fully
comprehend the joys of wine;
I do not proclaim them to the sober.*

A STATEMENT OF RESOLUTIONS
AFTER BEING DRUNK ON
A SPRING DAY

BY LI T'AI-PO

This time of ours
Is like a great, confused dream.
Why should one spend one's life in toil?
Thinking this, I have been drunk all day.
I fell down and lay prone by the pillars
in front of the house;
When I woke up, I gazed for a long time
At the courtyard before me.
A bird sings among the flowers.
May I ask what season this is?
Spring wind,
The bright oriole of the water-flowing
flight calls.
My feelings make me want to sigh.
The wine is still here, I will throw back
my head and drink.

I sing splendidly,
I wait for the bright moon.
Already, by the end of the song, I have
forgotten my feelings.

RIVER CHANT

BY LI T'AI-PO

Fig-wood oars,
A boat of the wood of the sand-pear.
At either end,
Jade flageolets and pipes of gold.

Amidships,
Jars of delectable wine,
And ten thousand pints
Put by.

A boat-load of singing-girls
Following the water ripples —
Going,
Stopping,
Veering —

The Immortal waited,
Then mounted and rode the yellow crane.

But he who is the guest of the sea has no
such desire,
Rather would he be followed by the
white gulls.

The *tsu* and *fu* of Ch'u P'ing hang sus-
pended like the sun and moon.
The terraces and the pleasure-houses
Of the Kings of Ch'u
Are empty heaps of earth.

I am drunk with wine,
With the sweet taste of it;
I am overflowed with the joy of it.
When I take up my writing-brush,
I could move the Five Peaks.

When I have finished my poem,
I laugh aloud in my arrogance.
I rise to the country of the Immortals
which lies in the middle of the sea.
If fame followed the ways of the good
official,
If wealth and rank were long constant,
Then indeed might the water of the Han
River flow Northwest.

SEPARATED BY IMPERIAL
SUMMONS FROM HER
WHO LIVES WITHIN

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

The Emperor commands; three times the
summons. He who left has not yet
returned.
To-morrow, at sunrise, he will go out by
the Pass of Wu.
From the upper chamber of white jade,
I shall gaze far off; but I shall be able
to make out nothing.
Our thoughts will be with each other. I
must ascend the Looking-for-Husband
Hill.

II

As I left my door, my wife dragged my
clothes with all her strength.
She asked me in how many days I should
return from the West.
"When I return, supposing I wear at my
girdle the yellow gold seal,
You must not imitate Su Ch'in's wife
and not leave your loom."

III

The upper chamber of kingfisher jade,
the stairs of gold —
Who passes the night alone, leaning
against the door and sobbing?
She sits all night by the cold lamp until
the moon melts into the dawn.
Her streaming, streaming tears are ex-
hausted — to the West of the Ch'u
Barrier.

A WOMAN SINGS TO THE AIR:
"SITTING AT NIGHT"

BY LI T'AI-PO

A Winter night, a cold Winter night. To
me, the night is unending.
I chant heavily to myself a long time. I
sit, sit in the North Hall.
The water in the well is solid with ice.
The moon enters the Women's Apart-
ments.
The flame of the gold lamp is very small,
the oil is frozen. It shines on the
misery of my weeping.

The gold lamp goes out,
But the weeping continues and increases.
The Unworthy One hides her tears in her
sleeve.

She hearkens to the song of her Lord, to
the sound of it.

The Unworthy One knows her passion.

The passion and the sound unite,

There is no discord between them.

If a single phrase were unsympathetic to
my thoughts,

Then, though my Lord sang ten thousand
verses which should cause even the dust
on the beams to fly, to me it would be
nothing.

THE PALACE WOMAN OF HAN
TAN BECOMES THE WIFE OF
THE SOLDIERS' COOK

BY LI T'AI-PO

Once the Unworthy One was a maiden
of the Ts'ung Terrace.

Joyfully lifting my moth-pencilled eye-
brows, I entered the carnation-coloured
Palace.

Relying on myself, my flower-like face,

How should I know that it would wither
and fade?

Banished below the jade steps,
Gone as the early morning clouds are
gone,

Whenever I think of Han Tan City
I dream of the Autumn moon from the
middle of the Palace.

I cannot see the Prince, my Lord.

Desolate, my longing — until daylight
comes.

THE SORREL HORSE

BY LI T'AI-PO

The sorrel horse with the black tail gal-
lops, gallops, and neighs,

Lifting, curving his grey-jade hoofs.

He shies from the flowing water, unwill-
ing to cross,

As though he feared the mud for his em-
broided saddle-cloth.

The snow is white on the far frontier
hills,

The clouds are yellow over the misty
frontier sea.

I strike with my leather whip, there are
ten thousand *li* to go.

How can I accomplish it, thinking of
Spring in the Women's Apartments?

A POEM GIVEN TO A BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN ENCOUNTERED ON
A FIELD-PATH

BY LI T'AI-PO

The magnificent horse, galloping swiftly,
tramples the fallen flower.

Down comes the riding-whip, straight
down — it strikes the Five Cloud Cart.

The young person who lifts the pearl
door-screen is very beautiful. More-
over, she smiles.

She points to a Red Building in the dis-
tance — it is the home of the Flower
Maiden.

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO A FRIEND

BY LI T'AI-PO

Clear green hills at a right angle to the
North wall,

White water winding to the East of the
city.

Here is the place where we must part.
The lonely water-plants go ten thousand *li*;
The floating clouds wander everywhere
as does man.

Day is departing — it and my friend.
Our hands separate. Now he is going.
"Hsiao, hsiao," the horse neighs.
He neighs again, "Hsiao, hsiao."

DESCENDING THE EXTREME
SOUTH MOUNTAIN; PASSING
THE HOUSE OF HUI SSU,
LOVER OF HILLS; SPENDING
THE NIGHT IN THE PREPARA-
TION OF WINE

BY LI T'AI-PO

We come down the green-grey jade hill,
The mountain moon accompanies us
home.

We turn and look back up the path:
Green, green, the sky; the horizontal,
kingfisher-green line of the hills is fading.

Holding each other's hands, we reach the
house in the fields.

Little boys throw open the gate of thorn
branches,

The quiet path winds among dark bam-
boos,

Creepers, bright with new green, brush
our garments.

Our words are happy, rest is in them.
Of an excellent flavour, the wine! We
scatter the dregs of it contentedly.

We sing songs for a long time; we chant
them to the wind in the pine-trees.

By the time the songs are finished, the
stars in Heaven's River are few.

I am tipsy. My friend is continuously
merry.

In fact, we are so exhilarated that we both
forget this complicated machine, the
world.

THE TERRACED ROAD OF
THE TWO-EDGED SWORD
MOUNTAINS

BY LI T'AI-PO

Looking South and straight from Hsien
Yang for five thousand *li*,

One could see, among the full, blowing
clouds, the rocky sharpness of peaks,

Were it not for the horizontal line of
the Two-Edged Sword Mountains cut-
ting across the view.

They are flat against the green sky, and
open in the middle to let the sky
through.

On their heights, the wind whistles aw-
solutely in the pines; it booms in great,
long gusts; it clashes like the strings of
a jade-stone psaltery; it shouts on the
clearness of a gale.

In the Serpent River country, the gib-
bons — Oh-h-h-h-h — all the gibbons
together moan and grieve.

Beside the road, torrents flung from a
great height rush down the gully,
They toss stones and spray over the road,
they run rapidly, they whirl, they
startle with the noise of thunder.

I bid good-bye to my devoted friend —
Oh-h-h-h-h — now he leaves me.

When will he come again? Oh-h-h-h-h
— When will he return to me?

I hope for my dear friend the utmost
peace.

My voice is heavy, I sigh and draw my
breath haltingly.

I look at the green surface of the water
flowing to the East.

I grieve that the white sun hides in the
West.

The wild goose has taken the place
of the swallow — Oh-h-h-h-h — I hear
the pattering, falling noises of Au-
tumn.

Dark are the rain clouds; the colour of
the town of Ch'in is dark.

When the moon glistens on the Road of
the Two-Edged Sword — Oh-h-h-h-h —

I and you, even though in different
provinces, may drink our wine opposite
each other,

And listen to the talking
Of our hearts.

HEARING A BAMBOO FLUTE
ON A SPRING NIGHT IN THE
CITY OF LO YANG

BY LI T'AI-PO

From whose house do the invisible notes
of a jade flute come flying?

The Spring wind scatters them. They
fill the City of Lo Yang.

To-night, as the phrases form, I hear
 "The Snapped Willow."
 To whom do they not bring back the
 love of his old, early garden?

THE RETREAT OF HSIEH KUNG

BY LI T'AI-PO

The sun is setting — has set — on the
 Spring-green Mountain.
 Hsieh Kung's retreat is solitary and still.
 No sound of man in the bamboo grove.
 The white moon shines in the centre of
 the unused garden pool.
 All round the ruined Summer-house is
 decaying grass,
 Grey mosses choke the abandoned well.
 There is only the free, clear wind
 Again — again — passing over the stones
 of the spring.

A TRAVELLER COMES TO THE OLD TERRACE OF SU

BY LI T'AI-PO

The old Imperial Park — the ruined
 Terrace — the young willows.
 The water-chestnut pickers are singing, a
 simple song unaccompanied by instru-
 ments — but joy is unbearable.
 For now the moon over the Western
 River is alone.
 The time is past when she gazed upon
 the concubines in the Palace of the
 King of Wu.

THEME OF THE REST-HOUSE ON THE CLEAR WAN RIVER

BY LI T'AI-PO

I love the beauty of the Wan River.
 One can see its clear heart shining a
 hundred feet deep.
 In what way does it not equal the river
 Hsin An?
 For a thousand times eight feet one can
 see its bright bed.
 The white sand keeps the colour of the
 moon.
 The dark green bamboos accentuate the
 Autumn sounds.
 Really one cannot help laughing to think
 that, until now, the rapid current
 celebrated by Yen
 Has usurped all the fame.

DRINKING SONG

BY LI T'AI-PO

Do you not see the waters of the Yellow
 River coming down from Heaven?
 They rush with incredible speed to the
 sea, and they never turn and come
 back again.

Do you not see, in the clear mirror of
 the Guest Hall, the miserable white
 hair on my head?

At dawn it is like shining thread, but at
 sunset it is snow.

In this life, to be perfectly happy, one
 must drain one's pleasures;

The golden wine-cup must not stand
 empty opposite the moon.

Heaven put us here, we must use what
 we have.

Scatter a thousand ounces of silver and
 you are but where you were.

Boil the sheep,

Kill the ox,

Be merry.

We should drink three hundred cups at
 once.

Mr. Wise Gentleman Ts'en,
 And you, Mr. Scholar Tan Ch'iu,

Drink, you must not stop.

I will sing one of my poems for you,

Please lean over and listen:

"Bells! Drums! Delicacies

Worth their weight in jade —

These things

Are of the slightest value.

I only want to be drunk

For ages and never wake.

The sages and worthies of old times

Have left not a sound,

Only those who drank

Have achieved lasting fame.

The King of Ch'ên, long ago, caroused

In the Hall of Peaceful Content.

They drank wine paid

At a full ten thousand a gallon;

They surpassed themselves in mirth,

And the telling of obscene stories.

How can a host say

He has very little money.

It is absolutely imperative

That he buy wine for his friends.

Horses of five colours, dappled flower
 horses,

Fur coats costing

A thousand ounces of silver —

He sends his son to exchange
All these for delectable wine,
So that you and I together
May drown our ancient grief."

ANSWER TO AN AFFECTIONATE
INVITATION FROM TS'UI
FIFTEEN

BY LI T'AI-PO

You have the "bird's foot-print" characters.
You suggest that we drink together at
the Late Stream.
The characters you wrote are in the
centre of a foot of pure white silk,
They are like exquisite clouds dropped
from Heaven.
Having finished reading, I smile at the
empty air,
I feel as though my friend were before me
Reciting verses for a long time.
The characters are not faded. I shall
keep them in my sleeve, and they
should last three years.

PARROT ISLAND

BY LI T'AI-PO

The parrots come, they cross the river
waters of Wu.
The island in the river is called Parrot
Island.
The parrots are flying West to the
Dragon Mountain.
There are sweet grasses on the island,
and how green, green, are its trees!

The mists part and one can see the leaves
of the spear-orchid, and its scent is
warm on the wind;
The water is embroidered and shot with
the reflections of the peach-tree blossoms
growing on both banks.
Now indeed does the departing official
realize the full meaning of his banishment.

The long island—the solitary moon—
facing each other in the brightness.

THE HONOURABLE LADY CHIAO

BY LI T'AI-PO

Moon over the houses of Han, over the
site of Ch'in.

It flows as water—its brightness shone
on Ming Fei, the "Bright Concubine,"
Who took the road to the Jade Pass.

She went to the edge of Heaven, but
she did not return;

She gave up the moon of Han, she
departed from the Eastern Sea.

The "Bright Concubine" married in the
West, and the day of her returning
never came.

For her beautiful painted face, there was
the long, cold snow instead of flowers.

She, with eyebrows like the antennae of
moths, pined and withered.

Her grave is in the sand of the Barbarians'
country.

Because, when alive, she did not pay out
yellow gold,

The portrait painted of her was distorted.
Now she is dead no one can prevent the

bright green grass from spreading over
her grave,

And men weep because of it.

THINKING OF THE FRONTIER

BY LI T'AI-PO

At what season last year did my Lord
leave his Unworthy One?

In the Southern garden, the butterflies
were fluttering in the young green
grass.

Now, this year, at what season does the
Unworthy One cherish thoughts of her
Lord?

There is white snow on the Western
hills and the clouds of Ch'in are dark.

It is three thousand *li* from here to the
Jade Barrier.

I desire to send the "harmonious writings,"
but how can they reach you?

A SONG OF RESENTMENT

BY LI T'AI-PO

At fifteen, she entered the Palace of
Han,

Her flower-face was like a river in Spring.
The Prince chose her of the jade colour

To attend his rest within the embroidered
screen.

As she presented the pillow, she was
lovely as the evening moon.

He who wears the dragon robes de-

lighted in the sweetly scented wind of
her garments.

How was it possible for the "Flying
Swallow" to snatch the Emperor's
love?

Jealousy unending! Profoundest grief
which can so wound a person

And turn the black cloud head-dress to
frosted thistledown!

If, for one day, our desires be not
satisfied,

Verily the things of the world are nothing.
Change the duck-feather dress for sweet
wine,

Cease to embroider dragons on the
dresses for the wu dance.

She is chilly with bitterness,
Words cannot be endured.

For one's Lord one plays the table-lute
of wu-t'ing wood with strings of silk,
But when one's bowels are torn with
grief, the strings also break.

Grief in the heart at night is anguish
and despair.

PICKING WILLOW

BY LI T'AI-PO

The drooping willow brushes the very
clear water,
Beautifully it flickers in this East-wind
time of the year.

Its flowers are bright as the snow of the
Jade Pass,

Its leaves soft as smoke against the gold
window.

She, the Lovely One, bound in her long
thoughts;

Facing them, her heart is burnt with
grief.

Pull down a branch,
Catheter the Spring colour

And send it far,
Even to that place
Before the Dragon Gate.

AUTUMN RIVER SONG ON THE BROAD REACH

BY LI T'AI-PO

In the clear green water—the shim-
mering moon.

In the moonlight—white herons flying.

A young man hears a girl plucking water-
chestnuts;

They paddle home together through the
night, singing.

VISITING THE TAOIST PRIEST ON THE MOUNTAIN WHICH UPIHOLDS HEAVEN. HE IS ABSENT

BY LI T'AI-PO

A dog,

A dog barking.

And the sound of rushing water.

How dark and rich the peach-flowers
after the rain.

Every now and then, between the trees,
I see deer.

Twelve o'clock, but I hear no bell in the
ravine.

Wild bamboos slit the blue-green of a
cloudy sky.

The waterfall hangs against the jade-
green peak.

There is no one to tell me where he has
gone.

I lean against the pine-trees grieving.

REPLY TO AN UNREFINED PERSON ENCOUNTERED IN THE HILLS

BY LI T'AI-PO

He asks why I perch in the green jade
hills.

I smile and do not answer. My heart is
comfortable and at peace.

Fallen peach-flowers spread out widely,
widely, over the water.

It is another sky and earth, not the world
of man.

RECITING VERSES BY MOON- LIGHT IN A WESTERN UPPER CHAMBER IN THE CITY OF THE GOLDEN MOUND

BY LI T'AI-PO

The night is still in Chin Ling, a cool
wind blows.

I am alone in a high room, gazing over
Wu and Yüeh.

White clouds shine on the water and
 blur the reflection of the still city.
 The cold dew soaks my clothes, Autumn
 moonlight is damp.
 In the moonlight, murmuring poems, one
 loses count of time.
 From old days until now, people who
 can really see with their eyes are few,
 Those who understand and speak of a
 clear river as being bright as silk.
 I suggest that men meditate at length on
 Hsieh Hsüan Hui.

PASSING THE NIGHT AT THE
 WHITE HERON ISLAND

BY LI T'AI-PO

At dawn, I left the Red Bird Gate;
 At sunset, I came to roost on the White
 Heron Island.
 The image of the moon tumbles along
 the bright surface of the water.
 The Tower above the City Gate is lost
 in the twinkling light of the stars.
 I gaze far off, toward my beloved, the
 Official of Chin Ling,
 And the longing in my heart is like that
 for the Green Jasper Tree.
 It is useless to tell my soul to dream;
 When it comes back, it will feel the
 night turned to Autumn.
 The green water understands my thoughts,
 For me it flows to the Northwest.
 Because of this, the sounds of my jade
 table-lute
 Will follow the flowing of its current and
 carry my grief to my friend.

ASCENDING THE THREE
 CHASMS

BY LI T'AI-PO

The Sorceress Mountain presses against
 Green Heaven.
 The Serpent River runs terribly fast.
 The Serpent River can be suddenly
 exhausted.
 The time may never come when we shall
 arrive at the Green Heaven.
 Three dawns shine upon the Yellow
 Ox,
 Three sunsets — and we go so slowly.

Three dawns — again three sunsets —
 And we do not notice that our hair is
 white as silk.

PARTING FROM YANG, A HILL
 MAN WHO IS RETURNING TO
 THE HIGH MOUNTAIN

BY LI T'AI-PO

There is one place which is an ever-
 lasting home to me:
 The Jade Woman Peak on the High
 Southern Mountain.
 Often, a wide, flat moonlight
 Hangs upon the pines of the whirling
 Eastern stream.
 You are going to pick the fairy grasses
 And the shooting purple flower of the
ch'ang p'u.

After a year, perhaps, you will come to
 see me
 Riding down from the green-blue Heaven
 on a white dragon.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

BY LI T'AI-PO

In front of my bed the moonlight is very
 bright.
 I wonder if that can be frost on the
 floor?
 I lift up my head and look full at the
 full moon, the dazzling moon.
 I drop my head, and think of the home
 of old days.

THE SERPENT MOUND
 SENT AS A PRESENT TO CHIA
 THE SECRETARY

BY LI T'AI-PO

Chia, the Scholar, gazes into the West,
 thinking of the splendour of the
 Capitol.
 Although you have been transferred to
 the broad reaches of the river Hsiang,
 you must not sigh in resentment.
 The mercy of the Sainted Lord is far
 greater than that of Han Wên Ti.
 The Princely One had pity, and did not
 appoint you to the station of the
 Unending Sands.

ON THE SUBJECT OF OLD TAI'S
WINE-SHOP

BY LI T'AI-PO

Old 'Tai is gone down to the Yellow Springs.
Yet he must still wish to make "Great Spring Wine."
'There is no Li Po on the terrace of Eternal Darkness.
To whom, then, will he sell his wine?

DRINKING IN THE T'AO
PAVILION

BY LI T'AI-PO

The house of the lonely scholar is in the winding lane.
The great scholar's gate is very high.
The garden pool lies and shines like the magic gall mirror;
Groves of trees throw up flowers with wide, open faces;
The leaf-coloured water draws the Spring sun.
Sitting in the green, covered passage-way, watching the strange, red clouds of evening,
Listening to the lovely music of flageolets and strings,
The Golden Valley is not much to boast of.

A SONG FOR THE HOUR WHEN
THE CROW'S ROOST

BY LI T'AI-PO

'This is the hour when the crows come to roost on the Ku Su Terrace.
In his Palace, the King of Wu is drinking with Hsi Shih.
Songs of Wu — posturings of Ch'u dances — and yet the revels are not finished.
But already the bright hills hold half of the sun between their lips,
The silver-white arrow-tablet above the gold-coloured brass jar of the water-clock marks the dripping of much water,
And, rising, one can see the Autumn moon sliding beneath the ripples of the river,
While slowly the sun mounts in the East —
What hope for the revels now?

POEM SENT TO THE OFFICIAL
WANG OF HAN YANG

BY LI T'AI-PO

The Autumn moon was white upon the Southern Lake.
That night the Official Wang sent me an invitation.
Behind the embroidered bed-curtain lay the Official Secretary — drunk.
The woven dresses of the beautiful girls who performed the wu dance took charming lines,
The shrill notes of the bamboo flute reached to Mien and O,
The phrases of the songs rose up to the silent clouds.
Now that we are parted, I grieve.
We think of each other a single piece of water distant.

DRINKING ALONE ON THE
ROCK IN THE RIVER OF THE
CLEAR STREAM

BY LI T'AI-PO

I have a flagon of wine in my hand.
I am alone on the Ancestor Rock in the river.
Since the time when Heaven and Earth were divided,
How many thousand feet has the rock grown?
I lift my cup to Heaven and smile.
Heaven turns round, the sun shines in the West.
I am willing to sit on this rock forever, Perpetually casting my fish-line like Yen Ling.
Send and ask the man in the midst of the hills
Whether we are not in harmony, both pursuing the same thing.

A FAREWELL BANQUET TO MY
FATHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER
YUN, THE IMPERIAL
LIBRARIAN

BY LI T'AI-PO

When I was young, I spent the white days lavishly.
I sang — I laughed — I boasted of my ruddy face.

I do not realize that now, suddenly, I
 am old.
 With joy I see the Spring wind return.
 It is a pity that we must part, but let us
 make the best of it and be happy.
 We walk to and fro among the peach-
 trees and plum-trees.
 We look at the flowers and drink excel-
 lent wine.
 We listen to the birds and climb a little
 way up the bright hills.
 Soon evening comes and the bamboo
 grove is silent.
 There is no one — I shut my door.

IN THE PROVINCE OF LU, TO
 THE EAST OF THE STONE
 GATE MOUNTAIN, TAKING
 LEAVE OF TU FU

BY LI T'AI-PO

When drunk, we were divided; but we
 have been together again for several
 days.
 We have climbed everywhere, to every
 pool and ledge.
 When, on the Stone Gate Road,
 Shall we pour from the golden flagon
 again?
 The Autumn leaves drop into the Four
 Waters,
 The Ch'u Mountain is brightly reflected
 in the colour of the lake.
 We are flying like thistledown, each to
 a different distance;
 Pending this, we drain the cups in our
 hands.

THE MOON OVER THE
 MOUNTAIN PASS

BY LI T'AI-PO

The bright moon rises behind the Heaven-
 high Mountain,
 A sea of clouds blows along the pale,
 wide sky.
 The far-off wind has come from nearly
 ten thousand li,
 It has blown across the Jade Gate Pass.
 Down the Po T'eng Road went the people
 of Han
 To waylay the men of Hu beside the
 Bright Green Bay.

From the beginning, of those who go into
 battle,
 Not one man is seen returning.
 The exiled Official gazes at the frontier
 town,
 He thinks of his return home, and his
 face is very bitter.
 Surely to-night, in the distant cupola,
 He sighs, and draws heavy breaths. How
 then can rest be his?

THE TAKING-UP OF ARMS

BY LI T'AI-PO

A hundred battles, the sandy fields of
 battles, armour broken into fragments.
 To the South of the city they are already
 shut in and surrounded by many layers
 of men.
 They rush out from their cantonments.
 They shoot and kill the General of the
 Barbarians.
 A single officer leads the routed soldiers
 of the "Thousand Horsemen" return-
 ing whence they came.

A SONG OF THE REST-HOUSE
 OF DEEP TROUBLE

BY LI T'AI-PO

At Chin Ling, the tavern where travel-
 lers part is called the Rest-House of
 Deep Trouble.
 The creeping grass spreads far, far, from
 the roadside where it started.
 There is no end to the ancient sorrow,
 as water flows to the East.
 Grief is in the wind of this place, burn-
 ing grief in the white aspen.
 Like K'ang Lo I climb on board the dull
 travelling boat.
 I hum softly "On the Clear Streams
 Flies the Night Frost."
 It is said that, long ago, on the Ox Island
 Hill, songs were sung which blended
 the five colours.
 Now do I not equal Hsieh, and the
 youth of the House of Yüan?
 The bitter bamboos make a cold sound,
 swaying in the Autumn moonlight.
 I pass the night alone, desolate behind
 the reed-blinds, and dream of returning
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 I hum softly "On the Clear Streams
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 Hill, songs were sung which blended
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 youth of the House of Yüan?
 The bitter bamboos make a cold sound,
 swaying in the Autumn moonlight.
 I pass the night alone, desolate behind
 the reed-blinds, and dream of returning
 to my distant home.

THE "LOOKING-FOR-HUSBAND"
ROCK

BY LI T'AI-PO

In the attitude, and with the manner,
of the woman of old,
Full of grief, she stands in the glorious
morning light.
The dew is like the tears of to-day;
The mosses like the garments of years
ago.
Her resentment is that of the Woman of
the Hsiang River;
Her silence that of the concubine of the
King of Ch'u.
Still and solitary in the sweet-scented
mist,
As if waiting for her husband's re-
turn.

AFTER BEING SEPARATED FOR
A LONG TIME

BY LI T'AI-PO

How many Springs have we been apart?
You do not come home.
Five times have I seen the cherry-blos-
soms from the jade window,
Besides there are the "embroidered
character letters."
You must sigh as you break the seals.
When this happens, the agony of my
longing must stop your heart.
I have ceased to wear the cloud head-
dress. I have stopped combing and
dressing the green-black hair on my
temples.
My sorrow is like a whirling gale — like
a flurry of white snow.
Last year I sent a letter to the Hill of
the Bright Ledge telling you these
things;
The letter I send this year will again
implore you.

East wind — Oh-h-h-h!
East wind, blow for me.
Make the floating cloud come West-
ward.
I wait his coming, and he does not
come.
The fallen flower lies quietly, quietly,
thrown upon the green moss.

BITTER JEALOUSY IN THE
PALACE OF THE HIGH GATE

BY LI T'AI-PO

I

The Heavens have revolved. The "North-
ern Measure" hangs above the Western
wing.
In the Gold House, there is no one;
fireflies flit to and fro.
Moonlight seeks to enter the Palace of
the High Gate,
To one in the centre of the Palace it
brings an added grief.

II

Unending grief in the Cassia Hall. Spring
is forgotten.
Autumn dust rises up on the four sides
of the Yellow Gold House.
At night, the bright mirror hangs against
a dark sky;
It shines upon the solitary one in the
Palace of the High Gate.

ETERNALLY THINKING OF
EACH OTHER

BY LI T'AI-PO

(The Woman Speaks)

The colour of the day is over; flowers
hold the mist in their lips.
The bright moon is like glistening silk.
I cannot sleep for grief.
The tones of the Chao psaltery begin
and end on the bridge of the silver-
crested love-pheasant.
I wish I could play my Shu table-lute on
the mandarin duck strings.
The meaning of this music — there is
no one to receive it.
I desire my thoughts to follow the Spring
wind, even to the Swallow Mountains.
I think of my Lord far, far away, remote
as the Green Heaven.
In old days, my eyes were like horizontal
waves;
Now they flow, a spring of tears.
If you do not believe that the bowels of
your Unworthy One are torn and
severed,
Return and take up the bright mirror I
was wont to use.

(The Man Speaks)

We think of each other eternally.
 My thoughts are at Ch'ang An.
 The Autumn cricket chirps beside the
 railing of the Golden Well;
 The light frost is chilly, chilly; the colour
 of the bamboo sleeping mat is cold.
 The neglected lamp does not burn
 brightly. My thoughts seem broken off.
 I roll up the long curtain and look at the
 moon — it is useless, I sigh continually.
 The Beautiful, Flower-like One is as far
 from me as the distance of the clouds.
 Above is the brilliant darkness of a high
 sky,
 Below is the rippling surface of the clear
 water.
 Heaven is far and the road to it is long;
 it is difficult for a man's soul to com-
 pass it in flight.
 Even in a dream my spirit cannot cross
 the grievous barrier of hills.
 We think of each other eternally.
 My heart and my liver are snapped in
 two.

PASSIONATE GRIEF

BY LI T'AI-PO

Beautiful is this woman who rolls up the
 pearl-reed blind.
 She sits in an inner chamber,
 And her eyebrows, delicate as a moth's
 antennae,
 Are drawn with grief.
 One sees only the wet lines of tears.
 For whom does she suffer this misery?
 We do not know.

SUNG TO THE AIR:

"THE MANTZU LIKE AN IDOL"

BY LI T'AI-PO

The trees in the level forest stand in
 rows and rows,
 The mist weaves through them.
 The jade-green of the cold hillside coun-
 try hurts one's heart.
 Night colour drifts into the high cupola.
 In the cupola, a man grieves.

I stand — stand — on the jade steps,
 doing nothing.
 The birds are flying quickly to roost.

There is the road I should follow if I
 were going home.
 Instead, for me, the "long" rest-houses
 alternate with the "short" rest-houses.

 AT THE YELLOW CRANE
 TOWER, TAKING LEAVE OF
 MENG HAO JAN ON HIS
 DEPARTURE TO KUANG LING

BY LI T'AI-PO

I take leave of my dear old friend at the
 Yellow Crane Tower.
 In the flower-smelling mist of the Third
 Month he will arrive at Yang Chou.
 The single sail is shining far off — it is
 extinguished in the jade-coloured dis-
 tance,
 I see only the long river flowing to the
 edge of Heaven.

 IN DEEP THOUGHT, GAZING
 AT THE MOON

BY LI T'AI-PO

The clear spring reflects the thin, wide-
 spreading pine-tree —
 And for how many thousand, thousand
 years?
 No one knows.
 The late Autumn moon shivers along the
 little water ripples,
 The brilliance of it flows in through the
 window.
 Before I sit for a long time absent-
 mindedly chanting,
 Thinking of my friend —
 What deep thoughts!
 There is no way to see him. How then
 can we speak together?
 Joy is dead. Sorrow is the heart of man.

 THOUGHTS FROM A
 THOUSAND LI

BY LI T'AI-PO

Li Ling is buried in the sands of Hu.
 Su Wu has returned to the homes of
 Han.
 Far, far, the Five Spring Pass,
 Sorrowful to see the flower-like snow.
 He is gone, separated, by a distant
 country,
 But his thoughts return,

Long sighing in grief.
Toward the Northwest
Wild geese are flying.
If I sent a letter — so — to the edge of
Heaven.

WORD-PATTERN

BY LI T'AI-PO

The Autumn wind is fresh and clear;
The Autumn moon is bright.
Fallen leaves whirl together and scatter.
The jackdaws, who have gone to roost,
are startled again.
We are thinking of each other, but when
shall we see each other?
Now, to-night, I suffer, because of my
passion.

THE HEAVEN'S GATE
MOUNTAINS

BY LI T'AI-PO

In the far distance, the mountains seem
to rise out of the river;
Two peaks, standing opposite each other,
make a natural gateway.
The cold colour of the pines is reflected
between the river-banks,
Stones divide the current and shiver the
wave-flowers to fragments.
Far off, at the border of Heaven, is the
uneven line of mountain-pinnacles;
Beyond, the bright sky is a blur of rose-
tinted clouds.
The sun sets, and the boat goes on
and on —
As I turn my head, the mountains sink
down into the brilliance of the cloud-
covered sky.

POEM SENT ON HEARING THAT
WANG CH'ANG-LING HAD BEEN
EXILED TO LUNG PIAO

BY LI T'AI-PO

In Yang Chou, the blossoms are drop-
ping. The night-jar calls.
I hear it said that you are going to
Lung Piao — that you will cross the
Five Streams.
I fling the grief of my heart up to the
bright moon

That it may follow the wind and arrive,
straight as eyesight, to the West of
Yeh Lang.

A PARTING GIFT TO WANG LUN

BY LI T'AI-PO

Li Po gets into a small boat — he is on
the point of starting.
Suddenly he hears footsteps on the bank
and the sound of singing.
The Peach-Flower Pool is a thousand feet
deep,
Yet it is not greater than the emotion of
Wang Lun as he takes leave of me.

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO A
FRIEND WHO IS GOING ON
AN EXCURSION TO THE
PLUM-FLOWER LAKE

BY LI T'AI-PO

I bid you good-bye, my friend, as you are
going on an excursion to the Plum-
Flower Lake.
You should see the plum-blossoms open;
It is understood that you hire a person to
bring me some.
You must not permit the rose-red fra-
grance to fade.
You will only be at the New Forest Reach
a little time,
Since we have agreed to drink at the City
of the Golden Mound at full moon.
Nevertheless you must not omit the wild-
goose letter,
Or else our knowledge of each other will
be as the dust of Hu to the dust of
Yüeh.

A POEM SENT TO TU FU FROM
SHA CH'IU CH'ENG

BY LI T'AI-PO

After all, what have I come here to do?
To lie and meditate at Sha Ch'iu Ch'eng.
Near the city are ancient trees,
And day and night are continuous with
Autumn noises.
One cannot get drunk on Lu wine,
The songs of Ch'i have no power to
excite emotion.

I think of my friend, and my thoughts
are like the Wên River,
Mightily moving, directed toward the
South

BIDDING GOOD-BYE TO YIN SHU BY LI T'AI-PO

Before the White Heron Island — the
moon

At dawn to-morrow I shall bid good bye
to the returning traveller

The sky is growing bright,

The sun is behind the Green Dragon
Hill

Heard high it pushes out of the sea clouds
and appears

Flowing water runs without emotions,

The sail which will carry him away meets
the wind and fills

We watch it together We cannot bear
to be separated

Again we pledge each other from the cups
we hold in our hands

A DESULTORY VISIT TO THE FENG HSIEN TEMPLE AT THE DRAGON'S GATE

BY TU FU

I had already wandered away from the
People's Temple,

But I was obliged to sleep within the
temple precincts

The dark ravine was full of the music of
silence,

The moon scattered bright shadows
through the forest

The Great Gate against the sky seemed
to impinge upon the paths of the
planets

Sleeping among the clouds, my upper gar-
ments, my lower garments, were cold

Wishing to wake, I heard the sunrise bell
Commanding men to come forth and

examine themselves in meditation

THE THATCHED HOUSE UNROOFT BY AN AUTUMN GALE

BY TU FU

It is the Eighth Month, the very height
of Autumn

The wind rages and roars.

It tears off three layers of my grass roof
The thatch flies — it crosses the river —
it is scattered about in the open spaces
by the river

High flying, it hangs, tangled and floating,
from the tops of forest trees,

Low flying, it whirls — turns — and sinks
into the hollows of the marsh

The swarm of small boys from the South
Village laugh at me because I am old

and feeble

How dare they act like thieves and rob-
bers before my face

Openly seizing my thatch and running
into my bamboo grove?

My lips are scorched, my mouth dry, I
scream at them, but to no purpose.

I return, leaning on my staff I sigh and
breathe heavily

Presently, of a sudden, the wind ceases

The clouds are the colour of ink

The Autumn sky is endless — endless —
stretching toward dusk and night

My old cotton quilt is as cold as iron,
My restless son sleeps a troubled sleep,

his moving foot tears the quilt

Over the head of the bed is a leak Not
a place is dry

The rain streams and stands like hemp —
there is no break in its falling

Since this misery and confusion, I have
scarcely slept or dozed

All the long night, I am soaking wet
When will the light begin to sift in?

If one could have a great house of one
thousand, ten thousand rooms —

A great shelter where all the Empire's
shivering scholars could have happy
faces —

Not moved by wind or rain, solid as a
mountain —

Alas! When shall I see that house
standing before my eyes?

Then, although my own hut were
destroyed, although I might freeze and
die, I should be satisfied

THE RIVER VILLAGE BY TU FU

The river makes a bend and encircles the
village with its current.

All the long Summer, the affairs and

occupations of the river village are
quiet and simple.
The swallows who nest in the beams go
and come as they please.
The gulls in the middle of the river enjoy
one another, they crowd together and
touch one another.
My old wife paints a chess-board on
paper.
My little sons hammer needles to make
fish-hooks.
I have many illnesses, therefore my only
necessities are medicines;
Besides these, what more can so humble
a man as I ask?

THE EXCURSION
A NUMBER OF YOUNG
GENTLEMEN OF RANK,
ACCOMPANIED BY SINGING-
GIRLS, GO OUT TO ENJOY
THE COOL OF EVENING.
THEY ENCOUNTER A
SHOWER OF RAIN

BY TU FU

I

How delightful, at sunset, to loosen the
boat!
A light wind is slow to raise waves.
Deep in the bamboo grove, the guests
linger;
The lotus-flowers are pure and bright in
the cool evening air.
The young nobles stir the ice-water;
The Beautiful Ones wash the lotus-roots,
whose fibres are like silk threads.
A layer of clouds above our heads is
black.
It will certainly rain, which impels me to
write this poem.

II

The rain comes, soaking the mats upon
which we are sitting.
A hurrying wind strikes the bow of the
boat.
The rose-red rouge of the ladies from
Yueh is wet;
The Yen beauties are anxious about their
kingfisher-eyebrows.
We throw out a rope and draw in to the
sloping bank. We tie the boat to the
willow-trees.

We roll up the curtains and watch the
floating wave-flowers.

Our return is different from our setting
out. The wind whistles and blows in
great gusts.

By the time we reach the shore, it seems
as though the Fifth Month were
Autumn.

THE RECRUITING OFFICERS
AT THE VILLAGE OF THE
STONE MOAT

BY TU FU

I sought a lodging for the night, at
sunset, in the Stone Moat Village.

Recruiting Officers, who seize people by
night, were there.

A venerable old man climbed over the
wall and fled.

An old woman came out of the door and
peered.

What rage in the shouts of the Recruit-
ing Officers!

What bitterness in the weeping of the old
woman!

I heard the words of the woman as she
pled her cause before them:

"My three sons are with the frontier
guard at Yeh Ch'eng.

From one son I have received a letter.
A little while ago, two sons died in battle.
He who remains has stolen a temporary
lease of life;

The dead are finished forever.

In the house, there is still no grown man,
Only my grandson at the breast.

The mother of my grandson has not
gone,

Going out, coming in, she has not a
single whole skirt.

I am an old, old woman, and my strength
is failing,

But I beg to go with the Recruiting
Officers when they return this night.

I will eagerly agree to act as a servant at
Ho Yang;

I am still able to prepare the early morn-
ing meal."

The sound of words ceased in the long
night,

It was as though I heard the darkness
choke with tears.

At daybreak, I went on my way,
Only the venerable old man was left.

CROSSING THE FRONTIER

BY TU FU

I

When bows are bent, they should be bent
strongly;
When arrows are used, they should be
long.
The bow-men should first shoot the
horses.
In taking the enemy prisoner, the Leader
should first be taken;
There should be no limit to the killing
of men.
In making a kingdom, there must natu-
rally be a boundary.
If it were possible to regulate usurpa-
tion,
Would so many be killed and wounded?

II

At dawn, the conscripted soldiers enter
the camp outside the Eastern Gate.
At sunset, they cross the bridge of Ho
Yang.
The setting sun is reflected on the great
flags.
Horses neigh. The wind whines —
whines —
Ten thousand tents are spread along the
level sand.
Officers instruct their companies.
The bright moon hangs in the middle of
the sky.
The written orders are strict that the
night shall be still and empty.
Sadness everywhere. A few sounds from
a Mongol flageolet jar the air.
The strong soldiers are no longer proud,
they quiver with sadness.
May one ask who is their General?
Perhaps it is Ho P'iao Yao.

THE SORCERESS GORGE

BY TU FU

Jade dew lies upon the withered and
wounded forest of maple-trees.
On the Sorceress Hill, over the Sorceress
Gorge, the mist is desolate and dark.
The ripples of the river increase into
waves and blur with the rapidly flowing
sky.

The wind-clouds at the horizon become
confused with the Earth. Darkness.
The myriad chrysanthemums have
bloomed twice. Days to come —
tears.

The solitary little boat is moored, but
my heart is in the old-time garden.
Everywhere people are hastening to
measure and cut out their Winter
clothes.

At sunset, in the high City of the White
Emperor, the hurried pounding of
washed garments.

THINKING OF LI PO ON A
SPRING DAY

BY TU FU

The poems of Po are unequalled.
His thoughts are never categorical, but
fly high in the wind.
His poems are clear and fresh as those
of Yü, the official;
They are fine and easy as those of Pao,
the military counsellor.
I am North of the river Wei, looking at
the Spring trees;
You are East of the river, watching the
sunset clouds.
When shall we meet over a jug of
wine?
When shall I have another precious dis-
cussion of literature with you?

AT THE EDGE OF HEAVEN.
THINKING OF LI T'AI-PO

BY TU FU

A cold wind blows up from the edge of
Heaven.
The state of mind of the superior man is
what?
When does the wild goose arrive?
Autumn water flows high in the rivers
and lakes.

They hated your essay — yet your fate
was to succeed.
The demons where you are rejoice to see
men go by.
You should hold speech with the soul of
Yüan,
And toss a poem into the Mi Lo River as
a gift to him.

SENT TO LI PO AS A GIFT
BY TU FU

Autumn comes,
We meet each other
You still whirl about as a thistle down in
the wind.
Your Elixir of Immortality is not yet per-
fected
And, remembering Ko Hung, you are
ashamed.
You drink a great deal,
You sing wild songs,
Your days pass in emptiness.
Your nature is a spreading fire,
It is swift and strenuous
But what does all this bravery amount to?

A TOAST FOR MENG YUN-CH'ING
BY TU FU

Illimitable happiness,
But grief for our white heads
We love the long watches of the night,
the red candle.
It would be difficult to have too much of
meeting,
Let us not be in a hurry to talk of separa-
tion.
But because the Heaven River will sink,
We had better empty the wine cups.
'To-morrow, at bright dawn, the world's
business will entangle us.
We brush away our tears,
We go — East and West.

MOON NIGHT
BY TU FU

To night — the moon at Fu Chou.
In the centre of the Women's Apart-
ments
There is only one to look at it.
I am far away, but I love my little son,
my daughter.
They cannot understand and think of
Ch'ang An.
The sweet smelling mist makes the cloud
head dress damp,
The jade arm must be chilly
In this clear, glorious shining.
When shall I lean on the lonely screen?
When shall we both be shone upon, and
the stars of tears be dry?

HEARING THE EARLY ORIOLE
(WRITTEN IN EXILE)

BY PO CHU-I

The sun rose while I slept. I had not
yet risen
When I heard an early oriole above the
the roof of my house.
Suddenly it was like the Royal Park at
dawn,
With birds calling from the branches of
the ten thousand year trees.
I thought of my time as a Court Official
When I was meticulous with my pencil
in the Audience Hall.
At the height of Spring, in occasional
moments of leisure,
I would look at the grass and growing
things,
And at dawn and at dusk I would hear
this sound.
Where do I hear it now?
In the lonely solitude of the City of
Hsün Yang.
The bird's song is certainly the same,
The change is in the emotions of the
man.
If I could only stop thinking that I am
at the ends of the earth,
I wonder, would it be so different from
the Palace after all?

THE CITY OF STONES.
(NANKING)

BY LIU YU-HSI

Hills surround the ancient kingdom; they
never change.
The tide beats against the empty city,
and silently, silently, returns.
To the East, over the Huai River — the
ancient moon.
Through the long, quiet night it moves,
crossing the battlemented wall.

SUNG TO THE TUNE OF "THE
UNRIPE HAWTHORN BERRY"

BY NIU HSI-CHI

Mist is trying to hide the Spring-coloured
hills,
The sky is pale, the stars are scattered
and few.

The moon is broken and fading, yet there
is light on your face,
These are the tears of separation, for now
it is bright dawn.

We have said many words,
But our passion is not assuaged:
Turn your head, I have still something
to say:
Remember my skirt of green open-work
silk,
The sweet-scented grasses everywhere will
prevent your forgetting.

WRITTEN BY WANG WEI, IN
THE MANNER OF CHIA, THE
(PALACE) SECRETARY, AFTER
AN IMPERIAL AUDIENCE AT
DAWN IN THE "PALACE OF
GREAT BRILLIANCE"

At the first light of the still-concealed
sun, the Cock-man, in his dark-red cap,
strikes the tally-sticks and proclaims
aloud the hour.

At this exact moment, the Keeper of the
Robes sends in the eider-duck skin
dress, with its cloud-like curving
feather-scales of kingfisher green.

In the Ninth Heaven, the Ch'ang Ho
Gate opens; so do those of the Palaces,
and the Halls of Ceremony in the
Palaces.

The ten thousand kingdoms send their
ambassadors in the dresses and caps of
their ranks to do reverence before the
pearl-stringed head-dress.

The immediately-arrived sun tips the
"Immortal Palm"; it glitters.

Sweet-scented smoke rises and flows about
the Emperor's ceremonial robes, mak-
ing the dragons writhe.

The audience ended, I wish to cut the
paper of five colours and write upon it
the words of the Son of Heaven.

My jade girdle-ornaments clash sweetly
as I return to sit beside the Pool of the
Crested Love-Pheasant.

THE BLUE-GREEN STREAM

BY WANG WEI

Every time I have started for the Yel-
low Flower River,
I have gone down the Blue-Green Stream,

Following the hills, making ten thousand
turnings.

We go along rapidly, but advance scarcely
one hundred li.

We are in the midst of a noise of water,
Of the confused and mingled sounds of
water broken by stones,

And in the deep darkness of pine-trees.

Rocked, rocked,

Moving on and on,

We float past water-chestnuts

Into a still clearness reflecting reeds and
rushes.

My heart is clean and white as silk; it
has already achieved Peace;

It is smooth as the placid river.

I long to stay here, curled up on the
rocks,

Dropping my fish-line forever.

FARM HOUSE ON THE WEI STREAM

BY WANG WEI

The slanting sun shines on the cluster of
small houses upon the heights.

Oxen and sheep are coming home along
the distant lane.

An old countryman is thinking of the
herd-boy,

He leans on his staff by the thorn-branch
gate, watching.

Pheasants are calling, the wheat is com-
ing into ear,

Silk-worms sleep, the mulberry-leaves are
thin.

Labourers, with their hoes over their
shoulders, arrive;

They speak pleasantly together, loth to
part.

It is for this I long — unambitious peace!
Disappointed in my hopes, dissatisfied, I
hum "Dwindled and Shrunken."

SEEKING FOR THE HERMIT OF THE WEST HILL; NOT MEETING HIM

BY CIIU WEI

On the Nothing-Beyond Peak, a hut of
red grass.

I mount straight up for thirty li.

I knock at the closed door — no serving
boy.

I look into the room. There is only
the low table, and the stand for the
elbows.

If you are not sitting on the cloth seat of
your rough wood cart,
Then you must be fishing in the Autumn
water.

We have missed each other; we have not
seen each other;

My effort to do you homage has been in
vain.

The grass is the colour which rain
leaves.

From inside the window, I hear the
sound of pine-trees at dusk.

There is no greater solitude than to be
here.

My ears hear it; my heart spreads open to
it naturally.

Although I lack the entertainment of a
host,

I have received much — the whole doc-
trine of clear purity.

My joy exhausted, I descend the hill.

Why should I wait for the Man of Wis-
dom?

FLOATING ON THE POOL OF JO YA. SPRING

BY CHI WU-CH'EN

Solitary meditation is not suddenly
snapped off; it continues without in-
terruption.

It flows — drifts this way, that way —
returns upon itself.

The boat moves before a twilight
wind.

We enter the mouth of the pool by the
flower path

At the moment when night enfolds the
Western Valley.

The serrated hills face the Southern Con-
stellation,

Mist hangs over the deep river pools and
floats down gently, gently, with the
current.

Behind me, through the trees, the moon
is sinking.

The business of the world is a swiftly
moving space of water, a rushing,
spreading water.

I am content to be an old man holding
a bamboo fishing-rod.

SUNG TO THE AIR: "THE WANDERER" (COMPOSED BY SU WU IN THE TIME OF THE EMPEROR WU OF HAN)

BY MENG CHIAO

Thread from the hands of a doting
mother

Worked into the clothes of a far-off
journeying son.

Before his departure, were the close, fine
stitches set,

Lest haply his return be long delayed.

The heart — the inch-long grass —

Who will contend that either can repay
The gentle brightness of the Third

Month of Spring.

FAREWELL WORDS TO THE DAUGHTER OF THE HOUSE OF YANG

BY WEI YING-WU

Because of this, sad, sad has the whole
day been to me.

You must go forth and journey, far, very
far.

The time has come when you, the
maiden, must go.

The light boat ascends the great river.

Your particular bitterness is to have none
from whom you may claim support.

I have cherished you. I have pondered
over you. I have been increasingly
gentle and tender to you.

A child taken from those who have cared
for it —

On both sides separation brings the tears
which will not cease.

Facing, this, the very centre of the bowels
is knotted.

It is your duty, you must go. It is scarcely
possible to delay farther.

From early childhood, you have lacked a
mother's guidance,

How then will you know to serve your
husband's mother? I am anxious.

From this time, the support on which
you must rely is the home of your hus-
band.

You will find kindness and sympathy,
therefore you must not grumble;

Modesty and thrift are indeed to be
esteemed.

Money and jewels, maid-servants and furnishings — are these necessary, a perfection to be waited for?

The way of a wife should be filial piety, respect and compliance;

Your manner, your conduct, should be in accord with this way.

To-day, at dawn, we part.

How many Autumns will pass before I see you?

Usually I endeavour to command my feelings,

But now, when my emotions come upon me suddenly, they are difficult to control.

Being returned home, I look at my own little girl.

My tears fall as rain. They trickle down the string of my cap and continue to flow.

SUNG TO THE AIR: "LOOKING SOUTH OVER THE RIVER AND DREAMING"

BY WEN T'ING-YUN

The hair is combed,
The face is washed,
All is done.

Alone, in the upper story of my Summer-house, I bend forward, looking at the river.

A thousand sails pass — but among all of them the one is not.

The slant sunlight will not speak,
It will not speak.

The long-stretched water scarcely moves.

My bowels are broken within me.
Oh! Island of the White Water Flowers!

TOGETHER WE KNOW HAPPINESS

WRITTEN BY A DESCENDANT
OF THE FOUNDER OF THE
SOUTHERN T'ANG DYNASTY

Silent and alone, I ascended the West Cupola.

The moon was like a golden hook.

In the quiet, empty, inner courtyard, the coolness of early Autumn enveloped the wu-t'ung tree.

Scissors cannot cut this thing;
Unravelling, it joins again and clings.
It is the sorrow of separation,
And none other tastes to the heart like this.

ONCE MORE FIELDS AND GARDENS

BY T'AI YUAN-MING

Even as a young man
I was out of tune with ordinary pleasures.
It was my nature to love the rooted hills,
The high hills which look upon the four edges of Heaven.

What folly to spend one's life like a dropped leaf

Snared under the dust of streets,
But for thirteen years it was so I lived.

The caged bird longs for the fluttering of high leaves.

The fish in the garden pool languishes for the whirled water

Of meeting streams.

So I desired to clear and seed a patch of the wild Southern moor.

And always a countryman at heart,
I have come back to the square enclosures of my fields

And to my walled garden with its quiet paths.

Mine is a little property of ten *mou* or so,
A thatched house of eight or nine rooms.
On the North side, the eaves are overhanging

With the thick leaves of elm-trees,
And willow-trees break the strong force of the wind.

On the South, in front of the great hall,
Peach-trees and plum-trees spread a net of branches

Before the distant view.

The village is hazy, hazy,
And mist sucks over the open moor.
A dog barks in the sunken lane which runs through the village.
A cock crows, perched on a clipped mulberry.

There is no dust or clatter
In the courtyard before my house.

My private rooms are quiet,
And calm with the leisure of moonlight
through an open door.

For a long time I lived in a cage;
Now I have returned.
For one must return
To fulfil one's nature.

SONG OF THE SNAPPED WILLOW
WRITTEN DURING THE
LIANG DYNASTY

When he mounted his horse, he did not
take his leather riding-whip;
He pulled down and snapped off the
branch of a willow-tree.
When he dismounted, he blew into his
horizontal flute,
And it was as though the fierce grief of
his departure would destroy the
traveller.

THE CLOUDY RIVER
(FROM THE "BOOK OF ODES")

How the Cloudy River glitters —
Shining, revolving in the sky!
The King spoke:
"Alas! Alas!
What crime have the men of to-day com-
mitted
That Heaven sends down upon them
Confusion and death?
The grain does not sprout,
The green harvests wither,
Again and again this happens.
There is no spirit to whom I have not
rendered homage,
No sacrifice I have withheld for love.
My stone sceptres and round badges of
rank have come to an end.
Why have I not been heard?

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!
The heated air is overpowering; it is a
concentrated fierceness.
I have not ceased to offer the pure sacri-
fices,
I myself have gone from the border altars
to the ancestral temples.
To Heaven,
To Earth,
have made the proper offerings,
have buried them in the ground.

There is no spirit I have not honoured,
Hou Chi could do no more.
Shang Ti does not look favourably upon us.
This waste and ruin of the Earth —
If my body alone might endure it!

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!
I cannot evade the responsibility of it.
I am afraid — afraid; I feel in peril — I
feel in peril,
As when one hears the clap of thunder
and the roll of thunder.
Of the remnant of the black-haired
people of Chou
There will not be left so much as half
a man.
Ruler over the high, wide Heavens,
Even I shall not be spared.
Why should I not be terrified
Since the Ancestral sacrifices will be
ended?

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!
The consequences of it cannot be pre-
vented.
Scorching — scorching!
Blazing — blazing!
No living place is left to me.
The Great Decree of Fate is near its end.
There is none to look up to; none whose
counsel I might ask.
The many great officials, the upright
men of ancient days,
Cannot advise me in regard to these con-
sequences.
My father, my mother, my remote an-
cestors,
How can you endure this which has be-
fallen me?

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!
Parched and scoured the hills, the
streams.
Drought, the Demon of Drought, has
caused these ravages,
Like a burning fire which consumes every-
thing.
My heart is shrivelled with the heat;
Sorrow rises from the heart as smoke
from fire.
The many great officials, the upright men
of ancient days,

Do not listen to me.
Ruler of the high, wide Heavens,
Permit that I retire to obscurity.

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!

I strive, and force myself in vain.

I dread that which will come.

How — why — should I bear this mad-
ness of drought?

I suffer not to know the reason for it.

I offered the yearly sacrifices for full
crops in good time.

I neglected not one of the Spirits of the
Four Quarters of the Earth.

The Ruler of the high, wide Heavens

Does not even consider me.

I have worshipped and revered the
bright gods,

They should not be dissatisfied or angry
with me.

Already the drought is terrible beyond
expression!

Everything is in confusion; all authority
is gone;

My officials are reduced to extremity.

My Chief Minister is afflicted with a
continuing illness.

My Master of the Horse, my Com-
mander of the Guards,

My Steward, my attendants of the Right
and of the Left,

Not one among them has failed to try
and help the people,

Not one has given up because powerless.

I raise my head and look at the Ruler
of the wide, bright Heavens,

I cry: 'Why must I suffer such grief!'

I look upwards. I gaze at the wide, bright
Heavens.

There are little stars twinkling, even those
stars.

My officers and the great men of my
country,

You have wrought sincerely and without
gain.

The Great Decree is near its end.

Do not abandon what you have partly
accomplished,

Your prayers are not for me alone,

But to guard the people and those who
watch over them from calamity.

I look upwards. I gaze at the wide,
bright Heavens.

When shall I receive the favour of rest?"

TO THE AIR: "THE FALLEN LEAVES AND THE PLAINTIVE CICADA"

BY THE EMPEROR WU OF HAN

There is no rustle of silken sleeves,

Dust gathers in the Jade Courtyard.

The empty houses are cold, still, with-
out sound.

The leaves fall and lie upon the bars of
doorway after doorway.

I long for the Most Beautiful One; how
can I attain my desire?

Pain bursts my heart. There is no peace.

WRITTEN IN EARLY AUTUMN AT THE POOL OF SPRINKLING WATER

BY CHAO TI OF HAN, THE
"BRIGHT EMPEROR"

In Autumn, when the landscape is clear,
to float over the wide, water ripples,

To pick the water-chestnut and the lotus-
flower with a quick, light hand!

The fresh wind is cool, we start singing
to the movement of the oars.

The clouds are bright; they part before
the light of dawn; the moon has sunk
below the Silver River.

Enjoying such pleasure for ten thousand
years —

Could one consider it too much?

PROCLAIMING THE JOY OF CERTAIN HOURS BY THE EMPEROR LING OF (LATER) HAN

Cool wind rising. Sun sparkling on the
wide canal.

Pink lotuses, bent down by day, spread
open at night.

There is too much pleasure; a day can-
not contain it.

Clear sounds of strings, smooth flowing
notes of flageolets — we sing the "Jade
Love-Bird" song.

A thousand years? Ten thousand? Noth-
ing could exceed such delight.

A SONG OF GRIEF

BY PAN CHIEH-YU

Glazed silk, newly cut, smooth, glittering, white,
 As white, as clear, even as frost and snow.
 Perfectly fashioned into a fan,
 Round, round, like the brilliant moon,
 'Treasured in my Lord's sleeve, taken out,
 put in —
 Wave it, shake it, and a little wind flies
 from it.
 How often I fear the Autumn Season's
 coming
 And the fierce, cold wind which scatters
 the blazing heat.
 Discarded, passed by, laid in a box alone;
 Such a little time, and the thing of love
 cast off.

A LETTER OF THANKS FOR
 PRECIOUS PEARLS
 BESTOWED BY
 ONE ABOVE

BY CHIANG TS'AI-P'IN
 (THE "PLUM-BLOSSOM" CONCU-
 BINE OF THE EMPEROR
 MING HUANG)

It is long — long — since my two eye-
 brows were painted like cassia-leaves.
 I have ended the adorning of myself. My
 tears soak my dress of coarse red silk.
 All day I sit in the Palace of the High
 Gate. I do not wash; I do not comb
 my hair.
 How can precious pearls soothe so deso-
 late a grief.

DANCING

BY KANG KUEI-FEI
 (THE "WHITE POPLAR" IMPERIAL
 CONCUBINE OF THE EMPEROR
 MING HUANG)

Wide sleeves sway.
 Scents,
 Sweet scents
 Incessantly coming.

It is red lilies,
 Lotus lilies,
 Floating up,
 And up,
 Out of Autumn mist.

Thin clouds
 Puffed,
 Fluttered,
 Blown on a rippling wind
 Through a mountain pass.

Young willow shoots
 Touching,
 Brushing,
 The water
 Of the garden pool.

SONGS OF THE COURTESANS
 (WRITTEN DURING THE
 LIANG DYNASTY)
 ONE OF THE "SONGS OF THE
 TEN REQUESTS"

BY TING LIU NIANG

My skirt is cut out of peacock silk,
 Red and green shine together, they are
 also opposed.
 It dazzles like the gold-chequered skin of
 the scaly dragon.
 Clearly so odd and lovely a thing must
 be admired.
 My Lord himself knows well the size.
 I beg thee, my Lover, give me a girdle.

AI AI THINKS OF THE
 MAN SHE LOVES

How often must I pass the moonlight
 nights alone?
 I gaze far — far — for the Seven Scents
 Chariot.
 My girdle drops because my waist is
 shrunken.
 The golden hairpins of my disordered
 head-dress are all askew.

SENT TO HER LOVER YUAN AT
 HIO NAN (SOUTH OF THE RIVER)
 BY CHANG PI LAN (JADE-
 GREEN ORCHID) FROM
 HU PEI (NORTH OF
 THE LAKE)

My Lover is like the tree-peony of Lo
 Yang.
 I, unworthy, like the common willows
 of Wu Ch'ang.

Both places love the Spring wind.
When shall we hold each other's hands
again?

CH'IN, THE "FIRE-BIRD WITH
PLUMAGE WHITE AS JADE,"
LONGS FOR HER LOVER

Incessant the buzzing of insects beyond
the orchid curtain.
The moon flings slanting shadows from
the pepper-trees across the courtyard.
Pity the girl of the flowery house,
Who is not equal to the blossoms
Of Lo Yang.

THE GREAT HO RIVER
BY THE MOTHER OF THE
LORD OF SUNG

(FROM "THE BOOK OF ODES")

Who says the Ho is wide?
Why one little reed can bridge it.

Who says that Sung is far?
I stand on tiptoe and see it.

Who says the Ho is wide?
Why the smallest boat cannot enter.

Who says that Sung is far?
It takes not a morning to reach it.

WRITTEN PICTURES

AN EVENING MEETING

The night is the colour of Spring mists.
The lamp-flower falls,
And the flame bursts out brightly.
In the midst of the disorder of the dress-
ing-table
Lies a black eye-stone.
As she dances,
A golden hairpin drops to the ground.
She peeps over her fan,
Arch, coquettish, welcoming his arrival.
Then suddenly striking the strings of her
table-lute,
She sings —
But what is the rain of the Sorceress
Gorge
Doing by the shore of the Western Sea?
LI HAI-KU, 19th Century

THE EMPEROR'S RETURN FROM A JOURNEY TO THE SOUTH

Like a saint, he comes,
The Most Noble.
In his lacquered state chariot
He awes the hundred living things.
He is clouded with the purple smoke of
incense,
A round umbrella
Protects the Son of Heaven.
Exquisite is the beauty
Of the two-edged swords,

Of the chariots,
Of the star-embroidered shoes of the
attendants.
The Sun and Moon fans are borne before
him,
And he is preceded by sharp spears
And the blowing brightness of innumera-
ble flags.
The Spring wind proclaims the Em-
peror's return,
Binding the ten thousand districts to-
gether
In a chorded harmony of Peace and
Satisfaction,
So that the white-haired old men and
the multitudes rejoice,
And I wish to add my ode
In praise of perfect peace.

WEN CHENG-MING, 16th Century

ON SEEING THE PORTRAIT OF A BEAUTIFUL CONCUBINE

Fine rain,
Spring mud
Slippery as bean curds.
In a rose-red flash, she approaches —
Beautiful, sparkling like wine;
Tottering as though overcome with wine,
Her little feet slip on the sliding path:
Who will support her?
Clearly it is her picture

We see here,
In a rose-red silken dress,
Her hair plaited like the folds
Of a hundred clouds.
It is Manshu.

CH'EN HUNG-SHOU, 19th Century

CALLIGRAPHY

The writing of Li Po-hai
Is like the vermilion bird
And the blue-green dragon.
It drifts slowly as clouds drift;
It has the wide swiftness of wind.
Hidden within it lurk the dragon and
the tiger.

The writing of Chia, the official,
Is like the high hat of ceremonial.
It flashes like flowers in the hair,
And its music is the trailing of robes
And the sweet tinkling of jade girdle-
pendants.
Because of his distinguished position,
He never says anything not sanctioned by
precedent.

LIANG T'UNG-SHU, 18th Century

THE PALACE BLOSSOMS

When the rain ceases,
The white water flowers of Ch'ang Lo
stroll together at sunset
In the City by the River.
The young girls are no longer confined
In the gold pavilions,
But may gaze at the green water
Whirling under the bridge of many turn-
ings.

TAI TA-MIEN, 18th Century

ONE GOES A JOURNEY

He is going to the Tung T'ing Lake,
My friend whom I have loved so many
years.
The Spring wind startles the willows
And they break into pale leaf.
I go with my friend
As far as the river-bank.
He is gone —
And my mind is filled and overflowing
With the things I did not say.

Again the white water flower
Is ripe for plucking.

The green, pointed swords of the iris
Splinter the brown earth.
To the South of the river
Are many sweet-olive trees.
I gather branches of them to give to my
friend
On his return.

LIU SHIH-AN, 18th Century

FROM THE STRAW HUT AMONG THE SEVEN PEAKS

I

From the high pavilion of the great rock,
I look down at the green river.
There is the sail of a returning boat.
The birds are flying in pairs.
The faint snuff colour of trees
Closes the horizon.
All about me
Sharp peaks jag upward;
But through my window,
And beyond,
Is the smooth, broad brightness
Of the setting sun.

II

Clouds brush the rocky ledge.
In the dark green shadow left by the
sunken sun
A jade fountain flies,
And a little stream,
Thin as the fine thread spun by sad
women in prison chambers,
Slides through the grasses
And whirls suddenly upon itself
Avoiding the sharp edges of the iris-
leaves.
Few people pass here.
Only the hermits of the hills come in
companies
To gather the Imperial Fern.
Lu KUN, 19th Century

ON THE CLASSIC OF THE HILLS AND SEA

In what place does the cinnabar-red tree
of the alchemists seed?
Upon the sun-slopes
Of Mount Mi
It pushes out its yellow flowers
And rounds its crimson fruit.
Eat it and you will live forever.

The frozen dew is like white jade;
It shimmers with the curious light of
gems.

Why do people regard these things?
Because the Yellow Emperor considers
them of importance.

Written by LI HAI-KU, 19th Century
Composed by T'AO CH'EN

THE HERMIT

A cold rain blurs the edges of the river.
Night enters Wu.
In the level brightness of dawn
I saw my friend start alone for the Ch'u
Mountain.

He gave me this message for his friends
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My heart is a piece of ice in a jade cup.

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AFTER HOW MANY YEARS

SPRING

The willows near the roadside rest-house
are soft with new-burst buds.
I saunter along the river path,
Listening to the occasional beating of
the ferry drum.

Clouds blow and separate,
And between them I see the watch towers
Of the distant city.

They come in official coats
To examine my books.
Months go by;
Years slide backwards and disappear.

Musing,
I shut my eyes
And think of the road I have come,
And of the Spring weeds
Choking the fields of my house.

SUMMER

The rain has stopped.
The clouds drive in a new direction.
The sand is so dry and hard that my
wooden shoes ring upon it
As I walk.
The flowers in the wind are very beauti-
ful.

A little stream quietly draws a line
Through the sand.
Every household is drunk with sacrificial
wine,
And every field is tall with millet
And pale young wheat.
I have not much business.
It is a good day.
I smile.
I will write a poem
On all this sudden brightness.

AUTUMN

Hoar-frost is falling,
And the water of the river runs clear.
The moon has not yet risen,
But there are many stars.
I hear the watch-dogs
In the near-by village.
On the opposite bank
Autumn lamps are burning in the win-
dows.

I am sick,
Sick with all the illnesses there are.
I can bear this cold no longer,
And a great pity for my whole past life
Fills my mind.
The boat has started at last.
O be careful not to run foul
Of the fishing-nets!

WINTER

I was lonely in the cold valleys
Where I was stationed.
But I am still lonely,
And when no one is near
I sigh.
My gluttonous wife rails at me
To guard her bamboo shoots.
My son is ill and neglects to water
The flowers.
Oh yes,
Old red rice can satisfy hunger,
And poor people can buy muddy, un-
strained wine
On credit.
But the pile of land-tax bills
Is growing;
I will go over and see my neighbour,
Leaning on my staff.

LI HAI-KU, 19th Century

We see here,
In a rose-red silken dress,
Her hair plaited like the folds
Of a hundred clouds.
It is Manshu.

CH'EN HUNG-SHOU, 19th Century

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And the blue-green dragon.
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And poor people can buy muddy, un-
strained wine
On credit.
But the pile of land-tax bills
Is growing;
I will go over and see my neighbour,
Leaning on my staff.

LI HAI-KU, 19th Century

THE INN AT THE MOUNTAIN
PASS

I return to the inn at the foot of the
Climbing Bean Pass.
The smooth skin of the water shines,
And the clouds slip over the sky.
This is the twilight of dawn and dusk.
On the top of Hsi Lêng
The hill priest sits in the evening
And meditates.
Two —
Two —
Those are the lights of fishing-boats
Arriving at the door.

WANG CHING-TS'ENG, 19th Century

LI T'AI-PO MEDITATES

Li Po climbed the Flowery Mountain
As far as the Peak of the Fallen Precipice.
Gazing upward, he said:
"From this little space my breath can
reach the God Star."
He sighed, regretting his irresolution, and
thought:
"Hsieh T'iao alarms people with his
poetry.
I can only scratch my head
And beseech the Green Heaven
To regard me."

HO PING-SHOU, 19th Century

PAIR OF SCROLLS

Shoals of fish assemble and scatter,
Suddenly there is no trace of them.

The single butterfly comes —

Goes —

Comes —

Returning as though urged by love.

HO SHAO-CHI, 19th Century

TWO PANELS

By the scent of the burning pine-cones,
I read the "Book of Changes."

Shaking the dew from the lotus-flowers,
I write T'ang poetry.

LIANG T'UNG-SHU, 19th Century

THE RETURN

He is a solitary traveller
Returning to his home in the West.
Ah, but how difficult to find the way!
He has journeyed three thousand *li*.
He has attended an Imperial audience at
the Twelve Towers.
He sees the slanting willows by the road
With their new leaves,
But when he left his house
His eyes were dazzled by the colours
Of Autumn.
What darkness fills them now!
He is far from the Autumn-bright hills
He remembers.
The spread of the river before him is
empty,
It slides — slides.

LI HAI-KU, 19th Century

EVENING CALM

The sun has set.
The sand sparkles.
The sky is bright with afterglow.
The small waves flicker,
And the swirling water rustles the stones.
In the white path of the moon,
A small boat drifts,
Seeking for the entrance
To the stream of many turnings.
Probably there is snow
On the shady slopes of the hills.

KAO SHIH-CHI, 19th Century

FISHING PICTURE

The fishermen draw their nets
From the great pool of the T'an River.
They have hired a boat
And come here to fish by the reflected
light
Of the sunken sun.

TA CHUNG-KUANG, 19th Century

SPRING. SUMMER. AUTUMN

The stream at the foot of the mountain
Runs all day.
Even far back in the hills,
The grass is growing;
Spring is late there.
From all about comes the sound

Of dogs barking
And chickens cheeping.
They are stripping the mulberry-trees,
But who planted them?

What a wind!
We start in our boat
To gather the red water-chestnut.
Leaning on my staff,
I watch the sun sink
Behind the Western village.
I can see the apricot-trees
Set on their raised stone platform,
With an old fisherman standing
Beside them.
It makes me think
Of the Peach-Blossom Fountain,

And the houses
Clustered about it.

Let us meet beside the spring
And drink wine together.
I will bring my table-lute;
It is good
To lean against
The great pines.
In the gardens to the South,
The sun-flowers are wet with dew;
They will pick them at dawn.
And all night
In the Western villages
One hears the sound of yellow millet
being pounded.

LI HAI-KU, 19th Century

NOTES

SONGS OF THE MARCHES

NOTE 1

It is the Fifth Month,
But still the Heaven-high hills
Shine with snow.

The Fifth Month corresponds to June. (See Introduction.) The Heaven-high hills are the T'ien Shan Mountains, which run across the Northern part of Central Asia and in places attain a height of 20,000 feet.

NOTE 2

Playing "The Snapped Willow."

The name of an old song suggesting homesickness; it is translated in this volume. It was written during the Liang Dynasty (A.D. 502-557). References to it are very common in Chinese poetry.

NOTE 3

So that they may be able in an instant to rush upon the Barbarians.

The Chinese regarded the tribes of Central Asia, known by the generic name of Hsiung Nu, as Barbarians, and often spoke of them as such. It was during the reign of Shih Huang Ti (221-206 B.C.) that these tribes first seriously threatened China, and it was to resist their incur-

sions that the Great Wall was built. They were a nomadic people, moving from place to place in search of fresh pasture for their herds. They were famous for their horsemanship and always fought on horseback.

NOTE 4

And the portrait of Ho P'iao Yao
Hangs magnificently in the Lin Pavilion.

Ho P'iao Yao was a famous leader whose surname was Ho. He was given the pseudonym of P'iao Yao, meaning "to whirl with great speed to the extreme limit," because of his energy in fighting. His lust for war was so terrible that the soldiers under him always expected to be killed. After his death, the Emperor Wu of Han erected a tomb in his honour. It was covered with blocks of stone in order that it might resemble the Ch'i Lien Mountains, where Ho P'iao Yao's most successful battles had been fought.

The Lin Pavilion was a Hall where the portraits of distinguished men were hung.

NOTE 5

The Heavenly soldiers arise.

The Chinese soldiers were called the "Heavenly Soldiers" because they fought

for the Emperor, who was the Son of Heaven.

NOTE 6

Divides the tiger tally.

A disk broken in half, worn as a proof of identity and authority. The General was given one half, the Emperor kept the other.

NOTE 7

The Jade Pass has not yet been forced.

In order to reach the Central Asian battle-fields, the soldiers were obliged to go out through the Jade Pass, or Barrier, which lay in the curious bottle-neck of land between the mountain ranges which occupy the centre of the continent.

NOTE 8

They seized the snow of the Inland Sea.

The Inland, or Green Sea, is the Chinese name for the Kokonor Lake lying West of the Kansu border.

NOTE 9

They lay on the sand at the top of the Dragon Mound.

The Dragon Mound is a high ridge of land on the Western border of Shensi, now comprising part of the Eastern boundary of Kansu. The native accounts say that the road encircles the mountains nine times, and that it takes seven days to make the ascent. "Its height is not known. From its summit, one can see five hundred *li*. To the East, lie the homes of men; to the West, wild wastes. The sound of a stone thrown over the precipice is heard for several *li*."

NOTE 10

All this they bore that the Moon Clan.

Name of one of the Hsiung Nu tribes. It was this tribe, known to Europeans under name of Huns, who overran Europe in the Fifth Century.

THE PERILS OF THE SHU ROAD

NOTE 11

During the reign of the T'ang Emperor, Hsüan Tsung (A.D. 712-756), better

known as Ming Huang, a rebellion broke out under An Lu-shan, an official who had for many years enjoyed the Emperor's supreme favour. Opinions among the advisers to the throne differed as to whether or not the Emperor had better fly from his capital and take refuge in the province of Szechwan, the ancient Shu. Li T'ai-po strongly disapproved of the step, but as he was no longer in office could only express his opinion under the guise of a poem. This poem, which the Chinese read in a metaphorical sense, describes the actual perils of the road leading across the Mountains of the Two-Edged Sword, the only thoroughfare into Szechwan. Li T'ai-po's counsel did not prevail, however, and the Emperor did actually flee, but not until after the poem was written.

NOTE 12

No greater undertaking than this has been since Ts'un Ts'ung and Yü Fu ruled the land.

These were early Rulers. Ts'an Ts'ung was the first King of Shu, the modern Szechwan. He was supposed to be a descendant of the semi-legendary Yellow Emperor.

NOTE 13

But the earth of the mountain fell and overwhelmed the Heroes so that they perished.

An historical allusion to five strong men sent by the King of Shu to obtain the daughters of the King of Ch'in.

NOTE 14

Above, the soaring tips of the high mountains hold back the six dragons of the sun.

The sun is supposed to drive round the Heavens once every day in a chariot drawn by six dragons and driven by a charioteer named Hsi Ho.

NOTE 15

The gibbons climb and climb.

Gibbons, which are very common in this part of China, are a small species of tailless ape, thoroughly arboreal in their habits. They make the woods sound with

meantly cries at night, and are unsurpassed in agility and so swift in movement as to be able to catch flying birds with their paws.

NOTE 16

This is what the Two-Edged Sword Mountains are like!

In this range, the mountains are so high, the cliffs so precipitous, and the passes so few, that it was almost impossible to devise a means of crossing them. The Chinese, however, had invented an ingenious kind of pathway called a "terraced" or "flying" road. Holes are cut in the face of the cliffs, and wooden piles are mortised into them at an angle. Tree trunks are then laid across the space between the tops of the piles and the cliff wall, making a corduroy road, the whole being finally covered with earth. These roads are so solidly built that not only people, but horses and even small carts, can pass over them. As there are no railings, however, travel upon them is always fraught with more or less danger.

LOOKING AT THE MOON AFTER RAIN

NOTE 17

Half of the moon-toad is already up.

In Chinese mythology, the *ch'an*, a three-legged toad, lives in the moon and is supposed to swallow it during an eclipse. The toad is very long-lived and grows horns at the age of three thousand years. It was originally a woman named Ch'ang O, who stole the drug of Immortality and fled to the moon to escape her husband's wrath. The moon is often referred to as *ch'an*, as in the poem.

NOTE 18

The glimmer of it is like smooth hoarfrost spreading over ten thousand li.

A li is a Chinese land measurement, equal to about one third of a mile.

THE LONELY WIFE

NOTE 19

There is only the moon, shining through the clouds of a hard, jade-green sky.

The term "jade," in Chinese literature, includes both the *jadites* and *nephrites*. These semi-transparent stones are found in a great variety of colours. There are black jades; pure white jades, described by the Chinese as "mutton fat"; jades with brown and red veins; yellow jades tinged with green; grey jades with white or brown lines running through them; and, most usual of all, green jades, of which there are an infinite number of shades.

These green jades vary from the dark, opaque moss green, very much like the New Zealand "green-stone," to the jewel jade called by the Chinese *fei t'ui*, or "kingfisher feather," which, in perfect examples, is the brilliant green of an emerald. As a result of this range of colouring, the Chinese use the term "jade" to describe the tints seen in Nature. The colours of the sky, the hills, the sea, can all be found in the jades, which are considered by the Chinese as the most desirable of precious stones. In addition to its employment in actual comparison, the word "jade" is very often used in a figurative sense to denote anything especially desirable.

NOTE 20

Beneath the quilt of the Fire-Bird, on the bed of the Silver-Crested Love-Pheasant.

The Fire-Bird is the *Luan*, and the Love-Pheasant the *Feng Huang*; both are fully described in the table of mythical animals in the Introduction.

NOTE 21

As the tears of your so Unworthy One escape and continue constantly to flow.

The term "Unworthy One" is constantly used by wives and concubines in speaking of themselves to their husbands or to the men they love.

NOTE 22

As I toss on my pillow, I hear the cold, nostalgic sound of the water-clock.

The *clepsydra*, or water-clock, has been used by the Chinese for many centuries, one can still be seen in the North Worshipping Tower in Canton, and another

in the "Forbidden" portion of the Peking Palace, where the dethroned Manchu Emperor lives. The following account of the one in Canton is taken from the 'Chinese Repository,' Volume XX, Page 430. The clepsydra is called the 'copper jar water dropper'. There are four covered jars standing on a brickwork stairway the top of each of which is level with the bottom of the one above it. The largest measures twenty three inches high and broad and contains seventy cetties or muids seven and a half pints of water, the second is twenty two inches high and twenty one inches broad, the third, twenty one inches high and twenty broad, and the lowest, twenty three inches high and nineteen inches broad. Each is connected with the other by an open trough along which the water trickles. The wooden index in the lowest jar is set every morning and afternoon at five o'clock by placing the mark on it for these hours even with the cover through which it rises and indicates the time. The water is dipped out and poured back into the top jar when the index shows the completion of the half day, and the water is renewed every quarter."

THE PLEASURES WITHIN THE PALACE

NOTE 23

From little, little girls they have lived
in the Golden House

The "Golden House" is an allusion to a remark made by the Emperor Wu of Han who, when still a boy, exclaimed that if he could marry his lovely cousin Achiao he would build a golden house for her to live in.

Palaces were often given most picturesque names, and different parts of the precincts were described as being of 'jade' or some other precious material, the use of the word "golden" is, of course, in this case, purely figurative.

The organization of the Imperial seraglio which contained many thousands of women, was most complicated, and the ladies belonged to different classes or ranks.

There was only one Empress, whose

title was *Hou*, and, if the wife of the preceding monarch were still alive she was called *I'ai Hou*, or Greater Empress. These ladies had each their own palace. Next in rank came the principal Imperial concubines or secondary wives called *Iei*. As a rule, there were two of them, and they had each their palace and household. After them came the *P'in* described as "Imperial concubines of first rank," or muids of honour, who lived together in a large palace and who once they had attained this rank, could never be dispersed (See Note 69). The ladies of the Court are often spoken of as *Iei P'in*. Of lower rank than these were the innumerable Palace women called *Ch'ieh*, concubines or handmaids. The use of the word is not confined to the inmates of the Palace, as ordinary people may have *ch'ieh*. Little girls who were especially pretty, or who showed unusual promise, were often sent to the Palace when quite young, that they might become accustomed to the surroundings while still children (See Introduction).

NOTE 24

They are lovely, lovely, in the Purple Hall
The Ruler of Heaven lives in a circum-
polar constellation called the Tzu Wei
Purple Enclosure, therefore the Palace of
his Son, the Ruler of Earth, is called
"Purple."

NOTE 25

Their only sorrow, that the songs and
wu dances are over

The wu dance is a posturing dance for which special, very elaborately embroidered dresses with long streamers are worn. As the arms move, these scarves float rhythmically in the air.

NOTE 26

Changed into the five coloured clouds and
flown away

The allusion to the five coloured clouds is to the beautifully variegated clouds, bright with the five colours of happiness, upon which the Immortals ride.

WRITTEN IN THE CHARACTER
OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

NOTE 27

Bright, bright, the gilded magpie mirror.

Magpies are the birds of happiness. There is an old story of the Gold Magpie which tells that, ages ago, a husband and wife, at parting, divided a round mirror between them, each keeping a half as a guarantee of fidelity. Unhappily, the wife forgot her marriage vows, and to her horror the half circle she had kept turned into a magpie and flew away. Since then, magpies are often carved on mirror backs as reminders and warnings.

NOTE 28

I sit at my dressing-stand, and I am like
the Green Fire-Bird who, thinking of
its mate, died alone.

The Green Fire-Bird is a fabulous creature who is regarded as the embodiment of every grace and beauty. It is the essence of the Fire God, and reference to it in stories of love and marriage are frequent. One of the most popular of these tales is that of a King of India who caught a beautiful bird with green plumage of an extraordinary brilliance. He valued it greatly, and had an exquisite gold cage made for it. For three years it lived in captivity, and not a sound came from it in all that time. At last, the King, who was much puzzled at its silence, consulted his wife, saying: "Is the creature dumb?" She replied: "No, but every creature is the same, when it meets one of its own species it will speak." Not knowing how to obtain a mate for the Green Fire-Bird, the King placed a large mirror in its cage. The Luan danced with joy, uttered strange cries, and then, with all its strength, hurled itself against its own reflection and fell dead.

NOTE 29

My tears, like white jade chop-sticks, fall
in a single piece.

It was said of the Empress Ch'ên of Wei (403-241 A.D.) that her tears fell so fast they formed connected lines like jade chop-sticks.

SONGS TO THE PEONIES

NOTE 30

The "Songs to the Peonies" were written on a Spring morning when Ming Huang, accompanied by Yang Kuei-fei, his favourite concubine, and his Court, had gone to see the blooms for which he had a passion. As he sat, admiring the flowers and listening to the singing of the Palace maidens, he suddenly exclaimed: "I am tired of these old songs, call Li Po." The poet was found, but unfortunately in a state best described by the Chinese expression of "great drunk." Supported by attendants on either side of him, he appeared at the pavilion, and while Yang Kuei-fei held his ink slab, dashed off the "Songs." She then sang them to the air, "Peaceful Brightness," while the Emperor beat time.

The "Songs" compare Yang Kuei-fei to the Immortals and to Li Fu-jên, a famous beauty of whom it was said that "one glance would overthrow a city, a second would overthrow the State." But, unluckily, Li T'ai-po also brought in the name of the "Flying Swallow," a concubine of the Han Emperor Ch'êng, who caused the downfall of the noble Pan Chieh-yü (see Note 155) and is looked upon as a despicable character. Kao Li-shih, the Chief Eunuch of the Court, induced Yang Kuei-fei to take this mention as an insult, and it finally cost Li T'ai-po his place at Court.

In the third "Song," there is an allusion to the Emperor under the figure of the sun. When his presence is removed, the unhappy, jealous flowers feel as if they were growing on the North side of the pavilion.

Yang Kuei-fei, the most famous Imperial concubine in Chinese history, was a young girl of the Yang (White Poplar) family, named Yü Huan, or Jade Annet; she is generally referred to as Yang Kuei-fei or simply Kuei-fei — Exalted Imperial Concubine.

The Chief Eunuch brought her before the T'ang Emperor, Ming Huang, at a time when the old man was inconsolable from the double deaths of his beloved Empress and his favourite mistress.

The story goes that the Emperor first

saw Yang Yü Huan, then fifteen years old, as she was bathing in the pool made of stone white as jade, in the pleasure palace he had built on the slopes of the Li Mountains. As the young girl left the water, she wrapped herself in a cloak of open work gauze through which her skin shone with a wonderful light. The Emperor immediately fell desperately in love with her, and she soon became chief of the Palace ladies wearing "half the garments of an Empress."

Yang Kuei fei rose to such heights of power that her word was law, she had her own palace, her own dancing girls, and was even allowed by the doting monarch to adopt the great An Lu shan, for whom she had a passion, as her son. Her follies and extravagancies were innumerable, and her ill fame spread about the country to such an extent that, when the rebellion broke out (see Note 37), the soldiers refused to fight until she had been given over to them for execution.

After her death, Ming Huang spent three inconsolable years as an exile in Szechwan, and his first act upon his return to the Empire, which he had ceded to his son, was to open her grave. It was empty. Even the gold hair ornaments, and the half of a round gold box shared with the Emperor as an emblem of conjugal unity had gone the only trace of the dead beauty was the scent bag in which she had kept these treasures. "Ah," cried the unhappy monarch, "may I not see even the bones of my beloved?" In despair, he sent for a Taoist magician and begged him to search the Worlds for Yang Kuei fei. The Taoist burnt charms to enlist the help of the beneficent spirits, but these were unsuccessful in their search. He finally sat in contemplation until the "vital essence" issued from his body and descended to the World of Shades. Here the names of all the spirits who have passed from the World of Light are entered in classified books, but that of Yang Kuei fei was not among them. The demon in charge insisted that if the name were not entered, the spirit had not arrived and the Taoist left, sad and crestfallen.

He then reflected that if she really were not at the Yellow Springs below,

she must be among the Immortals above. He therefore ascended to Paradise, and asked the first person he met, who happened to be the Weaving Maiden who lives in the sky, for news of the lost lady. The Weaving Maiden was most uncommunicative, and found much difficulty in believing that Ming Huang, who had consented to the execution of Yang Kuei fei, really mourned her death, but finally admitted that she was living among the Immortals on the island of P'eng Lai in the Jade grey Sea, and even assisted the Taoist to find her. She then told Yang Kuei fei that, if she still loved the Emperor, the Moon Mother might be induced to allow a meeting at the full moon on the fifteenth day of the Eighth Month. Yang Kuei fei eagerly assented, and giving the Taoist a gold hairpin and her half of the round box as a proof of her existence, begged that he hasten back to the World of Light and make all arrangements with her lover.

Accordingly, at the appointed time, the Taoist threw his fly-whip into the air, creating a bridge of light between this world and the moon, and over this Ming Huang passed. Yang Kuei fei was waiting for him. She stood under the great cassia tree which grows in the moon, and was surrounded by fairies.

The story, which is often sung to the air "Rainbow Skirts and Feather Collar," goes on to relate that the Weaving Maiden was moved to deep pity by their joy at meeting and arranged with the Jade Emperor, Chief Ruler of the Heavens, that the pair, immortalized by their great love, should live forever in the Tao Li Heaven.

THE PALACE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON ROBES

NOTE 31

I ponder his regard, not mine the love
Enjoyed by those within the Purple
Palace

The Palace woman of Ch'in was evidently one of the lower ranks of concubines who lived in the Women's Apartments and only appeared when sent for, not in

one of the palaces given to ladies of higher rank.

NOTE 32

If floods should come, I also would not leave.

A bear might come and still I could protect.

Now that she is no longer needed, she reflects sadly on the stories of two heroines whose behaviour she would gladly have emulated. These are Pên Chieh-yü, a favourite of the Han Emperor, Yüan, who once protected her master with her own body from the attack of a bear which had broken out of its cage; and Lin Fu-jên, concubine of King Chao of Ch'u. It is told of Lin Fu-jên that one day she went with the King to the "Terrace by the Stream," where he told her to wait for him until he returned from the capital. While she waited, the river rose, but she refused to leave unless by Imperial command. By the time this arrived she was drowned.

NOTE 33

Of serving Sun and Moon.

The "Sun and Moon" are the Emperor and Empress.

THE NANKING WINE-SHOP

NOTE 34

In the wine-shops of Wu, women are pressing the wine.

Wine made from grain is fermented for several weeks in tubs and then strained or "pressed" through cloths. It is not red, like wine from grapes, but either a shade of yellow or pure white. Wines made from grapes, plums, apples, pears, lichis, and roses, are sometimes used, but are not nearly so strong as the decoctions from grains.

FENG HUANG T'AI

NOTE 35

The silver-crested love-pheasants strutted upon the Pheasant Terrace.

About A.D. 493, three strange and beautiful birds were noticed inside the city

walls of Nanking, then called the "City of the Golden Mound." At first, the people did not suspect the identity of the birds, but when they saw that all the other birds assembled and appeared to be paying homage to the strangers, they realized that the visitors were the famous Fêng Huang. (See table of mythical birds in Introduction.) The terrace was built to commemorate the occasion.

NOTE 36

Here also, drifting clouds may blind the Sun.

The drifting clouds are supposed to be the evil courtiers who have poisoned the mind of the Emperor, i.e. the Sun, against Li T'ai-po.

THE NORTHERN FLIGHT

NOTE 37

The An Lu-shan rebellion, which broke out during the reign of the T'ang Emperor, Ming Huang, was very nearly successful, and, if the leader had not been assassinated in A.D. 757 by his son, might have caused the overthrow of the dynasty. As it was, the Emperor, having fled to Szechwan — a step strongly deprecated by Li T'ai-po in the poem, "The Perils of the Shu Road" (see Note 11) — abdicated in favour of his son, Su Tsung, who crushed the rebellion. The poem refers to the time when it was at its height, and the Emperor's forces were flying to the North.

NOTE 38

The rushing whale squeezes the Yellow River;

The man-eating beasts with long tusks assemble at Lo Yang.

During the rebellion, both sides of the Yellow River were lined with rebels, the population was obliged to fly, and the country was devastated as if a whale had rushed up the river and caused it to overflow its banks.

The "beasts" are fabulous creatures called *tsu chih*, with tusks three feet long, who delight in eating the flesh of men. Li T'ai-po uses them *meta-*

phorically for the rebels who are threatening the capital

NOTE 39

When, before our glad faces, shall we see the Glory of Heaven?

The Emperor, under the usual figure of the Sun

THE CROSSWISE RIVER

NOTE 40

I say the Crosswise River is terrible The savage wind blows as if it would overturn the Heaven's Gate Mountains

The 'Crosswise River' is that section of the Yangtze which flows past steep cliffs in Anhwei. The 'Heaven's Gate Mountains' tower above, making a sharp defile

NOTE 41

From the beginning of things, the Ox Ledge has been more dangerous than the Standing Horse Hill

A very swift current runs past the Ox Ledge, and boats are obliged to wait for daylight before attempting to breast it. The Standing Horse Hill, so called from its resemblance to a standing horse, is above a reach of the Yangtze where the river is comparatively tranquil

NOTE 42

Is the Eighth Month tide bore of Chékiang equal to this?

The Ch'ien T'ang River in Chékiang is famous for its bore, or tidal wave. During the autumnal equinox, this bore sometimes attains a height of twenty feet and more

CHI'ANG KAN

NOTE 43

I could not yet lay aside my face of shame,

I hung my head facing the dark wall

In China, little girls are supposed to hide their faces at the suggestion of marriage

NOTE 44

I often thought that you were the faithful man who clung to the bridge post

A certain Wei Shêng had a great reputation for sincerity and reliability, which was put to proof on an occasion when he had an appointment with a lady to meet on a bridge. The lady did not come. But, in spite of the fact that the waters rose to a flood, Wei Shêng would not leave. Finally, as he stood there clinging to the bridge post to keep himself firm, the waves engulfed him and he was never seen again

NOTE 45

That I should never be obliged to ascend the Looking for Husband Ledge

A hill on the banks of the Yungtze, so called because of a legend that, many centuries ago, a wife, whose husband had been away for several years, went daily to watch for his returning sail. In the end, she was turned to stone on the spot where she had kept her vigil

NOTE 46

To the Ch'ü T'ang Chasm and the Whirling Water Rock of the Yu River Which, during the Fifth Month, must not be collided with, Where the wailing of the gibbons seems to come from the sky

The Ch'ü T'ang is the first of the three noted chasms in the upper reaches of the Yangtze. At the point where the River Yu empties into the Yangtze, there is a great rock which, when uncovered, is more than two hundred feet high. In the Fifth Month (June) the water from the melting snows of the Tibetan mountains causes the river to rise to such an extent that the rock is covered, which makes it especially dangerous to navigation. The height of the cliffs on either side of the gorge is so tremendous that the wailing of the gibbons (see Note 15) in the woods above sounds as though it came from the sky

NOTE 47

I will not go far on the road to meet you I will go straight until I reach the Long Wind Sands

The Long Wind Sands are many a day's journey from the village of Chang Kan, which stands just outside the South Gate

of Nanking. What the lady implies is that she will go to "the ends of the earth" to meet her returning husband.

SORROW DURING A CLEAR AUTUMN

NOTE 48

I climb the hills of Chiu I.
The Chiu I, or "Nine Peaks," lie to the South of the Tung T'ung Lake into which the three divisions of the Hsiang River debouch after having united.

NOTE 49

I go by the "Bird's Path."
A term very often used for steep mountain paths.

NOTE 50

I think much of fishing for a leviathan from the Island of the Cold Sea.

The legend referred to at the end of the poem is as follows: A group of five islands in the Pi Hai, the Jade-grey Sea, were inhabited by the Immortals, who found themselves very uncomfortable as these islands, instead of standing firmly, rose and fell in the most disconcerting manner. The Immortals therefore applied to the Jade Emperor for assistance, and he commanded fifteen leviathans, three to each island, to raise their heads and support the islands, thus keeping them from rocking. All was well until a man from the Elder Dragon Country appeared and with one cast of his line caught six of the monsters, the result being that two of the islands toppled over and sank in the sea. The three which remain are known as the "Three Hills of the Immortals." This tale has become proverbial, and people who are disappointed in their ambition say "I have no rod with which to catch a leviathan."

POIGNANT GRIEF DURING A SUNNY SPRING

NOTE 51

I feel as one feels listening to the sound of the waters of the Dragon Mound in Ch'in.

(See Note 9.)

NOTE 52

The gibbons wailing by the Serpent River.

(See Note 15.)

NOTE 53

I feel as the "Shining One" felt when she passed the Jade Frontier, As the exile of Ch'u in the Maple Forest.

Two allusions which suggest homesickness. The "Shining One" is Chao Chun. (See Note 79.) The exile of Ch'u is Ch'u Yuan, the famous statesman. (See Note 62.)

TWO POEMS WRITTEN TO TS'UI (THE OFFICIAL)

NOTE 54

In both these poems, Ts'ui is compared to T'ao Yüan-ming, author of "Once More Fields and Gardens," published in this volume. T'ao is the ideal of the educated scholar, who prefers a life in the fields to any official post. Many stories are told of him. He planted five willows in front of his house, and is therefore often spoken of as the "Teacher of the Five Willows." He was so fond of music that he declared he could imagine the sweet sounds of the *ch'in*, and often carried about a stringless instrument over which he moved his hands. The *ch'in*, or table-lute, is fully described in Note 114.

WIND-BOUND AT THE NEW FOREST REACH

NOTE 55

To-day, at dawn, see the willows beyond the White Gate.

The White Gate is the Western Gate. The points of the compass are governed by colours, elements, mythological beasts, and seasons, thus:

East: Green. Wood. The Blue-green Dragon. Spring. South: Red. Fire. The Vermilion Bird. Summer. West: White. Metal. The White Tiger. Autumn. North: Black. Water. The Black Warrior. Winter. Centre: Yellow. Earth.

DRINKING ALONE IN THE
MOONLIGHT

NOTE 56

But we will keep our appointment by
the far-off Cloudy River.

The Cloudy River is the Chinese name
for the Milky Way.

NOTE 57

There would be no Wine Star in Heaven.

The Wine Star is a constellation composed
of three stars, to the North of the
Dipper.

NOTE 58

There should be no Wine Springs on
Earth.

The Wine Springs lie, one in Kansu, and
one in Shansi. The water of the one in
Kansu is supposed to taste like wine, that
of the one in Shansi is used in the making
of wine.

RIVER CHANT

NOTE 59

Jade flageolets and pipes of gold.

The Chinese flageolet is a tube measuring
a little more than a foot in length. It
has five holes above, one below, and one
at the end through which it is played.
They are now made of bamboo, but
formerly were made of copper, jadestone,
or marble, as such materials were con-
sidered less liable to be affected by the
weather.

NOTE 60

The Immortal waited,
Then mounted and rode the yellow crane.

T'ou T'zū-an, who had attained Immu-
rality by living a life of contemplation,
was transported to the Taoist Paradise
by a crane so old that it had turned
yellow.

NOTE 61

Rather would he be followed by the
white gulls.

This line refers to a story from a book
treating of Taoist subjects long supposed

to have been written by a philosopher
called Lieh Tzū, but this is now known
to have been a Second Century forgery.
A translation of the story reads: "The
man who lived by the sea loved the sea-
gulls. Every day, as the sun rose above
the horizon, the birds from the sea
assembled in hundreds and flew about.
His father said: 'I hear the sea-gulls
follow you and fly round you. Catch
some in your hands and bring them to
me that I too may enjoy them.' The
next day the birds from the sea all
performed the posturing dance in the
air, but did not descend."

NOTE 62

The *tzū* and *fu* of Ch'ü P'ing hang
suspended like the sun and moon.

The *tzū* and *fu* are two irregular forms
of verse, they are referred to in the Intro-
duction in the part dealing with versi-
fication. Ch'ü P'ing is another name for
Ch'ü Yüan, a famous poet and statesman
who lived 332-295 B.C. (See Introduc-
tion.)

NOTE 63

I could move the Five Peaks.

The sacred mountains of the "four
quarters" and the nadir (or the four
points of the compass and the centre
of the earth). They are the T'ai Shan
in the East, the Hua Shan in the West,
the Hêng Shan in the South, and the
Sung Shan in the centre.

SEPARATED BY IMPERIAL
SUMMONS

NOTE 64

The Emperor commands; three times the
summons. He who left has not yet
returned.

The official has not responded quickly
to the summons from the capital, so the
messenger has been obliged to come three
times. Upon the third occasion, the
official realizes that the matter is urgent
and prepares to depart the next day at
sunrise, before the messenger can have
reached the Palace on his return journey.

NOTE 65

Our thoughts will be with each other.
I must ascend the Looking-for-Husband Hill.

(See Note 45.)

NOTE 66

You must not imitate Su Ch'in's wife
and not leave your loom.

Su Ch'in, who lived in the Fourth Century B.C., was away from home many years; when he returned, his wife took no notice whatever, and did not even leave the loom at which she sat weaving cloth.

A WOMAN SINGS TO THE AIR:
"SITTING AT NIGHT"

NOTE 67

I sit, sit in the North Hall.

The "North Hall" is a term for the Women's Apartments, which always lie farthest from the Great Gate placed in the South wall of the house.

NOTE 68

Then, though my Lord sang ten thousand verses which should cause even the dust on the beams to fly, to me it would be nothing.

It is said that when Yü Kung, a man of the State of Lu who lived during the Han Dynasty, sang, the sounds were so exquisite that even the dust on the beams flew. "To cause the dust on the beams to fly" has therefore become a current saying.

THE PALACE WOMAN AND
THE SOLDIERS' COOK

NOTE 69

Once the Unworthy One was a maiden
of the Ts'ung Terrace.

The Ts'ung Terrace referred to by the sad lady who, in the dispersal of the Palace women (see Introduction), had fallen to such a low degree, stood in the Palace of King Chao, who lived at the time of the "Spring and Autumn Annals," many centuries before our era.

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
ENCOUNTERED ON A
FIELD-PATH

NOTE 70

Down comes the riding-whip, straight
down — it strikes the Five Cloud Cart.

The Immortals used Five Coloured Clouds to ride upon, therefore the term, "Five Cloud Cart," has become a complimentary expression for a cart or carriage in which a beautiful young woman is travelling.

HEARING A BAMBOO FLUTE
IN THE CITY OF LO YANG

NOTE 71

I hear "The Snapped Willow."

An allusion to the old song suggesting homesickness. (See Note 2.)

THE RETREAT OF HSIEH KUNG

NOTE 72

Hsieh Kung is the honorary title of the poet, Hsieh T'iao, who lived in the Fifth Century A.D. Li T'ai-po, who greatly admired him, constantly quoted his poems, and expressed a wish to be buried on the Spring-green Mountain where Hsieh Kung had lived. Some accounts say that he was first buried elsewhere, but that afterwards his body was removed and put where he desired.

A TRAVELLER COMES TO THE
OLD TERRACE OF SU

NOTE 73

The old Imperial Park — the ruined
Terrace — the young willows.

Early in the Fifth Century B.C., Fu Ch'ai, King of Wu, built the Ku Su Terrace to please Hsi Shih, one of the most famous beauties in history. It was nearly two miles long, and took three years to build. Its foundations can still be traced on the hills near Soochow, which was the capital of Wu.

THE REST-HOUSE ON THE
CLEAR WAN RIVER

NOTE 74

I love the beauty of the Wan River.
A little river near Ning Kuo-fu in
Anhui.

NOTE 75

Really, one cannot help laughing to think
that, until now, the rapid current
celebrated by Yen
Has usurped all the fame.

The philosopher Yen Kuang (*circa* A.D.
25) is better known as Yen Tzu-ling.
The river in which he loved to fish was
the Hsin An.

ANSWER TO AN AFFECTIONATE
INVITATION FROM TS'UI
FIFTEEN

NOTE 76

A party of friends who are in the habit
of meeting each other constantly are
called by numbers according to age. The
same custom is used to distinguish mem-
bers of a family. (See Introduction.)

NOTE 77

You have the "bird's foot-print" charac-
ters.

Writing is supposed by the Chinese to
have been invented by Ts'ang Chieh, a
minister of the Yellow Emperor (2698-
2598 B.C.) who, having "observed the
shapes of things in the heavens and the
forms of things on earth, also the foot-
prints of birds and beasts on the sand
and mud," suddenly conceived the idea
of pictographic writing. It is highly
complimentary to speak of a person's
writing as being like the "bird's foot-
prints."

NOTE 78

You suggest that we drink together at
the Lute Stream.

The Ch'in Ch'i T'ai (Table-lute Stream
Terrace) was a stone terrace where a
famous player of the table-lute, who is
said to have attained Immortality, lived.
The legend is that he took a small dragon

in the form of a carp from the Ch'in
stream and kept it for a month, when it
changed its shape into that of a dragon
and ascended to Heaven.

THE HONOURABLE LADY CHAO

NOTE 79

Moon over the houses of Han, over the
site of Ch'in.

Ch'in was the name of the State which
overcame all the others and welded China
into a homogeneous Empire instead of
a loose federation. (See Introduction.)
The lady Chao lived during the Han
Dynasty.

Wang Ch'iang, known to posterity as
Chao Chiin, the "Brilliant-and-Perfect,"
lived in the First Century B.C. The
daughter of educated parents, she was
brought up in the strictest Confucian
principles; in the words of the Chinese,
she "did not speak loudly nor did she
look beyond the doors, indeed, even
within the house, she only walked the
path which led to her mother's room.
Her ears were closed to all distracting
sounds, therefore her heart and mind
were pure like those of the Immortals."
Her father regarded her as a precious
jewel, and although many suitors pre-
sented themselves, he refused to listen
to their proposals, and finally, when she
was seventeen, sent her to the capital as
an offering to the Han Emperor Yuan.

Upon arriving at the Palace, the young
girl was housed in the inner rooms, among
the innumerable Palace women who lived
there in constant hope of a summons to
the Imperial presence. As the Son of
Heaven never went into this part of his
Palace, it was customary to catalogue
the inmates and submit their portraits to
him, a form of procedure which led to
much bribery of the Court painters. The
rigid principles of the daughter of the
Wang clan forbade her to comply with
this Palace custom, and the portrait
which appeared in the catalogue was such
a travesty of her exquisite features that it
roused no desire in the Imperial breast.

Five or six dreary years passed, and
the young girl remained secluded in the
Women's Apartments. Shortly before this

time, one of the Hsiung Nu tribes (see Note 3) had surrendered to the Chinese soldiers, and as a proof of good faith on both sides had received permission to serve as a frontier guard. Soon after, the head of the tribe sent to ask that one of Yüan Ti's ladies be sent him as Queen. The catalogue was consulted, and the decision fell upon the daughter of Wang as being the one among the Palace women who had the fewest charms. She was therefore told to prepare herself for a journey to the desert wastes where she would reign over a savage Central Asian tribe, a prospect terrifying to one brought up in strict seclusion among people of refinement.

Custom demanded that, on the point of departure, she should appear before the Son of Heaven in order to thank her Imperial Master for his kind thoughtfulness in thus providing for her future, and then be formally handed over to the envoys. The audience was held in one of the secondary halls, the Court was assembled, the envoys stood ready, and the lady entered. At the sight of her unusual beauty, every one was thunder-struck, even the Emperor could hardly refrain from springing off the Dragon Throne and speaking to her. But it was too late; there was nothing to be done. The most beautiful of all the Palace women was pledged to the Hsiung Nu Khan, the escort which was to convey her over the Jade Pass waited, and soon the broken-hearted girl set off.

Fury and consternation spread through the Palace; a camel laden with gold was sent in pursuit; the guilty painter, Mao Yen-shou, was executed and his immense fortune sent as a consolation to the Wang family; but all this could not save the young girl from her fate. The Hsiung Nu ambassador refused to ransom her, and she passed out through the Jade Barrier to the "Yellow Sand Fields" beyond.

The banished daughter of Han was true to the principles in which she had been schooled. Instead of committing suicide, as she longed to do, she submitted to the will of the Five Great Ones—Heaven, Earth, The Emperor, her Father, and her Mother—and per-

formed her duties as a wife to the best of her ability in spite of the homesickness from which she suffered perpetually.

Upon the death of the Khan, she felt that her hour of deliverance had at last come and that she was at liberty to poison herself. This she did, and was buried in the desert, but the mound over her grave remained always green.

Because of her pseudonym "Brilliant-and-Perfect," she is often referred to as "Ming Pei," the "Bright Concubine." Allusions to her story always suggest homesickness.

THINKING OF THE FRONTIER

NOTE 80

I desire to send the "harmonious writings."

Letters from wives to husbands are often spoken of as though they carried sweet sounds.

NOTE 81

He who wears the dragon robes delighted in the sweetly-scented wind of her garments.

Appointments for the Emperor's use were all spoken of as "dragon" appointments, and the analysis of the character which means the Emperor's love, is a dragon under a roof. Ladies' clothes were, and are to-day, kept in cupboards in which scented woods were burned, therefore as the long sleeves of their dresses swayed back and forth a sweet perfume came from them.

NOTE 82

How was it possible for the "Flying Swallow" to snatch the Emperor's love?

The "Flying Swallow" was a famous concubine. (See Note 30.)

RECITING VERSES BY MOONLIGHT

NOTE 83

I suggest that men meditate at length on Hsieh Hsüan Hui.

A reference, under a pseudonym, to the poet Hsieh T'iao, whose work Li T'ai-po

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Ch'in was the name of the State which overcame all the others and welded China into a homogeneous Empire instead of a loose federation. (See Introduction.) The lady Chao lived during the Han Dynasty.

Wang Ch'iang, known to posterity as Chao Chün, the "Brilliant-and-Perfect," lived in the First Century B.C. The daughter of educated parents, she was brought up in the strictest Confucian principles; in the words of the Chinese, she "did not speak loudly nor did she look beyond the doors, indeed, even within the house, she only walked the path which led to her mother's room. Her ears were closed to all distracting sounds, therefore her heart and mind were pure like those of the Immortals." Her father regarded her as a precious jewel, and although many suitors presented themselves, he refused to listen to their proposals, and finally, when she was seventeen, sent her to the capital as an offering to the Han Emperor Yuan.

Upon arriving at the Palace, the young girl was housed in the inner rooms, among the innumerable Palace women who lived there in constant hope of a summons to the Imperial presence. As the Son of Heaven never went into this part of his Palace, it was customary to catalogue the inmates and submit their portraits to him, a form of procedure which led to much bribery of the Court painters. The rigid principles of the daughter of the Wang clan forbade her to comply with this Palace custom, and the portrait which appeared in the catalogue was such a travesty of her exquisite features that it roused no desire in the Imperial breast.

Five or six dreary years passed, and the young girl remained secluded in the Women's Apartments. Shortly before this

time, one of the Hsiung Nu tribes (see Note 3) had surrendered to the Chinese soldiers, and as a proof of good faith on both sides had received permission to serve as a frontier guard. Soon after, the head of the tribe sent to ask that one of Yuan Ti's ladies be sent him as Queen. The catalogue was consulted, and the decision fell upon the daughter of Wang as being the one among the Palace women who had the fewest charms. She was therefore told to prepare herself for a journey to the desert wastes where she would reign over a savage Central Asian tribe, a prospect terrifying to one brought up in strict seclusion among people of refinement.

Custom demanded that, on the point of departure, she should appear before the Son of Heaven in order to thank her Imperial Master for his kind thoughtfulness in thus providing for her future, and then be formally handed over to the envoys. The audience was held in one of the secondary halls, the Court was assembled, the envoys stood ready, and the lady entered. At the sight of her unusual beauty, every one was thunder-struck, even the Emperor could hardly refrain from springing off the Dragon Throne and speaking to her. But it was too late; there was nothing to be done. The most beautiful of all the Palace women was pledged to the Hsiung Nu Khan, the escort which was to convey her over the Jade Pass waited, and soon the broken-hearted girl set off.

Fury and consternation spread through the Palace; a camel laden with gold was sent in pursuit; the guilty painter, Mao Yen-shou, was executed and his immense fortune sent as a consolation to the Wang family; but all this could not save the young girl from her fate. The Hsiung Nu ambassador refused to ransom her, and she passed out through the Jade Barrier to the "Yellow Sand Fields" beyond.

The banished daughter of Han was true to the principles in which she had been schooled. Instead of committing suicide, as she longed to do, she submitted to the will of the Five Great Ones—Heaven, Earth, The Emperor, her Father, and her Mother—and per-

formed her duties as a wife to the best of her ability in spite of the homesickness from which she suffered perpetually.

Upon the death of the Khan, she felt that her hour of deliverance had at last come and that she was at liberty to poison herself. This she did, and was buried in the desert, but the mound over her grave remained always green.

Because of her pseudonym "Brilliant-and-Perfect," she is often referred to as "Ming Pei," the "Bright Concubine." Allusions to her story always suggest homesickness.

THINKING OF THE FRONTIER

NOTE 80

I desire to send the "harmonious writings."

Letters from wives to husbands are often spoken of as though they carried sweet sounds.

NOTE 81

He who wears the dragon robes delighted in the sweetly-scented wind of her garments.

Appointments for the Emperor's use were all spoken of as "dragon" appointments, and the analysis of the character which means the Emperor's love, is a dragon under a roof. Ladies' clothes were, and are to-day, kept in cupboards in which scented woods were burned, therefore as the long sleeves of their dresses swayed back and forth a sweet perfume came from them.

NOTE 82

How was it possible for the "Flying Swallow" to snatch the Emperor's love?

The "Flying Swallow" was a famous concubine. (See Note 30.)

RECITING VERSES BY MOONLIGHT

NOTE 83

I suggest that men meditate at length on Hsieh Hsian Hui.

A reference, under a pseudonym, to the poet Hsieh T'iao, whose work Li T'ai-po

so much admired (See Note 72) "Hsuan" is applied to the names of gods to indicate that they deserve praise and worship, and "Hui" means bright, splendid, or a ray of the sun

PASSING THE NIGHT AT THE WHITE HERON ISLAND

NOTE 54

At dawn, I left the Red Bird Gate
An allusion to the bird which rules the
South (See Note 55)

NOTE 85

At sunset, I came to roost on the White
Heron Island.

According to the Chinese commentary,
this island lies "in the heart's centre of
the river, three *li* West of the district of
the Golden Mound (Nanking), and
many herons collect there"

NOTE 86

And the longing in my heart is like that
for the Green Jasper Tree

This tree grows in the Taoist Paradise,
supposed to lie in the K'un Lun Moun-
tains. Those who eat its blossoms become
immortal

ASCENDING THE THREE CHASMS

NOTE 87

These are the famous chasms of the
Yangtze River, between Ichang and
Chungking. Their names are "The
Terrifying Barrier," "The Sorceress
Gorge," and "The Western Sepulchre."
Joined together in one great line of
precipitous cliffs, they are among the
extraordinary natural objects of the world
and are most awe-inspiring

NOTE 88

The Serpent River runs terribly fast.
The Serpent River can be suddenly ex-
hausted.

A reference to the fact that, although the
water of the river flows with terrible
speed while the snow waters are coming

down, during the Winter it is very low,
and many parts are quite dry (See Note
46)

NOTE 89

Three dawns shine upon the Yellow Ox.
Three sunsets—and we go so slowly

A cliff beneath which are rapids so diffi-
cult and dangerous to pass that the
utmost care must be taken in navigating
them. Boats ascending this stretch of the
river often take several days to pass a
given point (See Introduction for a
description of the Yangtze River and
travel upon it)

PARTING FROM YANG, A HILL MAN

NOTE 90

You are going to pick the fairy grasses
And the shooting purple flower of the
ch'ang p'u

"Hill men" is a term applied to those
who desire to become worthy of joining
the ranks of the Immortals, and for this
reason lead a life of contemplation among
the hills. The fairy grasses and the
ch'ang p'u (see table of plants in Intro-
duction) both grow in the Taoist Para-
dises

NOTE 91

Riding down from the green-blue Heaven
on a white dragon.

The dragon is one of the steeds of the
Immortals.

THE SERPENT MOUND

NOTE 92

The mercy of the Santed Lord is far
greater than that of Han Wen Ti.
The Princely One had pity, and did not
appoint you to the station of the
Unending Sands

The allusion is to an incident which
occurred in the Second Century B.C.
when a famous scholar named Chia was
sent to Ch'ang Sha, literally "Unending
Sands," and died there of the damp
vapours.

ON THE SUBJECT OF OLD TAI'S
WINE-SHOP

NOTE 93

Old Tai is gone down to the yellow Springs.

The Yellow Springs lie in the nether world, where spirits go after death.

NOTE 94

There is no Li Po on the terrace of Eternal Darkness.

This world is known as the World of Light, and below it lies the World of Shades, where the sun never shines.

DRINKING IN THE T'AO
PAVILION

NOTE 95

The garden pool lies and shines like the magic gill mirror.

The Magic Gill Mirror was a square of glittering, polished metal supposed to possess the miraculous power of betraying the thoughts of all who looked into it, by making the heart and "five viscera" visible. The ferocious First Emperor used it to examine his numerous Palace women, and those who, by a palpitating gill, showed lack of faith were put to death.

NOTE 96

The Golden Valley is not much to boast of. A beautiful garden built by the rich and eccentric Shih Ch'ung (died A.D. 300) for his favourite concubine Lü Chu.

A SONG FOR THE HOUR WHEN
THE CROWS ROOST

NOTE 97

This is the hour when the crows come to roost on the Ku Su Terrace.

(See Note 73.)

NOTE 98

The silver-white arrow-tablet above the gold-coloured brass jar of the water-clock marks the dripping of much water.

(See Note 22.)

POEM SENT TO THE OFFICIAL
WANG OF HAN YANG

NOTE 99

The shrill notes of the bamboo flute reached to Mien and O.

Mien and O are the ancient names for Hankow and Wuchang.

DRINKING ALONE ON THE
ROCK IN THE RIVER OF THE
CLEAR STREAM

NOTE 100

Perpetually casting my fish-line like Yen Ling.

Yen Ling is one of the names of the philosopher Yen Kuang. (See Note 75.)

THE REST-HOUSE OF DEEP
TROUBLE

NOTE 101

At Chin Ling, the tavern where travellers part is called the Rest-House of Deep Trouble.

An inn fifteen *li* South of the district in which Chin Ling (Nanking) stands.

NOTE 102

Like K'ang Lo I climb on board the dull travelling boat.

K'ang Lo is a pseudonym for the poet Hsieh Ling-yün, who lived in the Fifth Century A.D.

NOTE 103

I hum softly "On the Clear Streams Flies the Night Frost."

A line from one of Hsieh Ling-yün's poems.

NOTE 104

It is said that, long ago, on the Ox Island Hill, songs were sung which blended the five colours.

The "five colours" are blue-green, yellow, carnation, white, and black. Anything that is perfectly harmonious is spoken of figuratively as being blended like the five colours.

Rapids flow past the Ox Island Hill on the Yangtze, which is not to be confused with the Ox Hill at the Yangtze Gorges.

NOTE 105

Now do I not equal Hsieh, and the youth of the House of Yüan?

Yüan Hung lived in the time of the Chin Dynasty. His poems were both erudite and beautiful, but his extreme poverty forced him to take a position on a freight-boat plying up and down the Yangtze. One night, as the vessel lay below the dangerous Ox Rapids waiting for daylight, the official of the place, a learned man named Hsieh Shang, heard Yüan Hung's exquisite songs and was so delighted that he insisted upon the singer's accompanying him to the Official Residence. Here the days and nights were passed in conversation, and upon Yüan Hung's departure, Hsieh gave him much silver and gold, and eventually used his influence to enable the young man to become an official. Since then all men have heard of Yüan Hung. Li T'ai-po compares his lonely lot to that of the youth who possessed a faithful friend.

NOTE 106

The bitter bamboos make a cold sound, swaying in the Autumn moonlight.

The ancient Chinese divided bamboos into two classes: the bitter and the tasteless.

THE "LOOKING-FOR-HUSBAND"
ROCK

NOTE 107

In the attitude, and with the manner, of the woman of old.

A reference to a legend of a woman who was turned to stone. (See Note 45.)

NOTE 108

Her resentment is that of the Woman of the Hsiang River.

O Huang and her sister Nü Ying were the wives of Shun, the "Perfect Emperor" (2317-2208 B.C.). When he died, and was buried near the Hsiang River,

they wept so copiously over his grave that their tears burned spots on the bamboos growing there, and thus was the variety known as the "spotted bamboo" created. Eventually the despairing ladies committed suicide by throwing themselves into the river.

NOTE 109

Her silence that of the concubine of the King of Ch'u.

Ts'u Fei, concubine of the King of Ch'u, was much distressed because her lord was of a very wild disposition, and only took pleasure in hunting and such pursuits. She constantly expostulated with him on his mode of life, but at last, finding that all her entreaties were in vain, she ceased her remonstrances and sank into a silence from which she could not be roused.

AFTER BEING SEPARATED
FOR A LONG TIME

NOTE 110

Besides there are the "embroidered character letters."

In the Fourth Century A.D., a lady, whose maiden name was Su, embroidered a long lament of eight hundred and forty characters in the form of a poetical palindrome and sent it to her husband who was exiled in Tartary.

BITTER JEALOUSY IN THE
PALACE OF THE HIGH GATE

NOTE 111

The Heavens have revolved. The "Northern Measure" hangs above the Western wing.

The "Northern Measure" is the Chinese name for the "Dipper," and on the fifteenth day of the Eighth Month, when it can be seen sinking in the West before bed-time, a festival is held. This is essentially a festival for women, who object to being parted from their husbands at that time. Incense is burned to the full moon, and many fruits and seeds, all of a symbolical nature denoting the desire for posterity, are set out for the moon goddess.

NOTE 112

In the Gold House, there is no one.
(See Note 23.)

ETERNALLY THINKING OF
EACH OTHER

NOTE 113

The tones of the Chao psaltery begin and end on the bridge of the silver-crested love-pheasant.

"The *se*, or psaltery, is made on the principle of the *ch'in*, and like that instrument has been made the subject of numerous allegorical comparisons. The number of strings has varied . . . but the *se* now in use has twenty-five strings. Each string is elevated on a movable bridge. These bridges represent the five colours: the first five are blue, the next red, the five in the middle are yellow, then come five white, and lastly five black." ("Chinese Music," by J. A. Van Aalst.) The most desirable specimens came from Chao, a place in Shensi. The allusion to the love-pheasants is, of course, symbolical. By it, the lady says that this instrument is only properly used for love-songs, with the implication that it is therefore impossible for her to play it now.

NOTE 114

I wish I could play my Shu table-lute on the mandarin duck strings.

The *ch'in*, or table-lute, lies on a table like a zither, and is played with the fingers. It is "one of the most ancient instruments, and certainly the most poetical of all . . . The dimensions, the number of strings, the form, and whatever is connected with this instrument had their principles in Nature. Thus the *ch'in* measured 3.66 feet, because the year contains a maximum of 366 days; the number of strings was five, to agree with the five elements; the upper part was made round, to represent the firmament; the bottom was flat, to represent the ground; and the thirteen studs stood for the twelve moons and the intercalary moon. The strings were also subjected to certain laws. The thickest string was composed of two hundred and forty threads and represented the Sovereign."

("Chinese Music," by J. A. Van Aalst.) The "Shu table-lute" is an allusion to Ssü Ma Hsiang-jü, a great poet and musician, who was a native of Shu. The mandarin ducks are emblems of conjugal love, and in speaking of them the wife expresses the wish that her husband were present to listen.

NOTE 115

I wish my thoughts to follow the Spring wind, even to the Swallow Mountains.

The Yen Jan, or "Swallow Mountains," lie several thousand miles to the West of Ch'ang An, in Central Asia.

NOTE 116

The neglected lamp does not burn brightly.

The lamps were little vessels filled with natural oil, upon which floated a vegetable wick. Unless constantly attended to, and this was the duty of the woman, the flame was small and insignificant.

SUNG TO THE AIR:
"THE MANTZU LIKE AN IDOL"

NOTE 117

The Mantzū are an aboriginal tribe still living in the far Southwest of China. It was here that Li T'ai-po was to have been exiled had not the sentence been commuted. (See Introduction.)

NOTE 118

Instead, for me, the "long" rest-houses alternate with the "short" rest-houses.

On the "great roads," which we should speak of as paths, rest-houses for the convenience of travellers are erected every five *li* (a *li* is one-third of a mile). These are called "short road rest-houses" and are simply shelters. There are also "long road rest-houses" every ten *li*, where the care-takers serve travellers with tea and food, and which are equipped with altars and idols for the convenience of the pious.

AT THE YELLOW CRANE
TOWER, TAKING LEAVE OF
MENG HAO JAN

NOTE 119

I take leave of my dear old friend at the Yellow Crane Tower.

Mêng Hao Jan (A.D. 689-740) was a very famous poet, one of whose idiosyncrasies was riding a donkey through the snow in a search for inspiration.

The Yellow Crane Tower is still standing at Wuchang. (see Note 60.)

THOUGHTS FROM A THOUSAND LI

NOTE 120

Li Ling is buried in the sands of Hu.

Li Ling lived during the reign of the Emperor Wu of Han (140-87 B.C.) at a time when the Hsiung Nu tribes were very troublesome. He penetrated far into the Hsiung Nu country, with a force of only five thousand infantry, and was there surrounded by thirty thousand of the enemy. After his men had exhausted their arrows, he was forced to surrender, and spent the rest of his life as a captive in Central Asia.

NOTE 121

Su Wu has returned to the homes of Han.

Su Wu lived during the same period as did Li Ling, and was sent by the Emperor Wu upon a mission of peace to the Hsiung Nu. By the time he reached the Court of the Khan, however, relations between the Chinese and the Barbarians were again strained, and he was taken prisoner. Various attempts were made to induce him to renounce his allegiance to China; he was thrown into prison and subsisted for days on the moisture which he sucked from his clothes, but all efforts to undermine his loyalty failed, and eventually he was sent to tend sheep on the grazing fields of the steppes. Years passed, Wu Ti, the "Military Emperor," died, and his successor Chao Ti made peace with the Central Asian tribes and sent envoys to ask for the return of the faithful Su Wu. The Khan replied that he was dead, but the envoy was able to answer that such could not be the case, as, not long before, the Emperor himself while hunting in his park had shot a wild goose, and had found a letter from Su Wu tied to its leg. The loyal official was therefore sent back to China. He had gone off in the prime of life; when

he returned, in 86 B.C., he was a broken-down, white-haired old man.

NOTE 122

Wild geese are flying.

If I sent a letter — so — to the edge of Heaven.

An allusion to the story of Su Wu. Letters anxiously awaited are often spoken of as "wild-goose" letters.

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO A FRIEND WHO IS GOING TO THE PLUM-FLOWER LAKE

NOTE 123

I bid you good-bye, my friend, as you are going on an excursion to the Plum-Flower Lake.

This lake lies about seven miles Southwest of Nanking. The legend is that, many years ago, a raft loaded with flowering plum-trees sank in it, and ever since, during the plum-blossom season, the lake is covered with plum-trees in bloom.

NOTE 124

Nevertheless you must not omit the wild-goose letter.

(See Notes 121 and 122.)

NOTE 125

Or else our knowledge of each other will be as the dust of Hu to the dust of Yüeh.

Hu is the Mongols' country to the North and West of the Great Wall, and Yüeh is the province of Chékiang in the Southeast of China.

A DESULTORY VISIT TO THE FENG HSIEN TEMPLE AT THE DRAGON'S GATE

NOTE 126

I had already wandered away from the People's Temple.

The Feng Hsien is one of the so-called Chao Ti temples. These temples are erected by the people, not by Imperial command, which fact is proclaimed on

an inscription written on a horizontal board placed over the main doorway. The Fêng Hsien temple stands in the Lung Mên, or Dragon Gate, a defile cut in the mountains of Honan by the great Yü when he drained the Empire about two thousand B.C. (See Introduction.) He is supposed to have been helped by a dragon who, with one sweep of its tail, cleft the mountain range in two, thus forcing the river I, a confluent of the Lo which is one of the tributaries of the Yellow River, to confine itself within the defile through which it runs in a series of rapids.

CROSSING THE FRONTIER — II

NOTE 127

Sadness everywhere. A few sounds from a Mongol flageolet jar the air.

The Hsiung Nu soldiers, against whom the Chinese are fighting, are so near that the sounds of their flageolets can be plainly heard.

NOTE 128

Perhaps it is Ho P'iao Yao.

(See Note 4.)

AT THE EDGE OF HEAVEN.
THINKING OF LI T'AI-PO

NOTE 129

The demons where you are rejoice to see men go by.

The demons are of the man-eating variety, the *yao kuai*. (See table of supernatural beings in Introduction.)

NOTE 130

You should hold speech with the soul of Yüan.

Ch'ü Yüan (see Note 62) drowned himself in the Mi Lo River.

SENT TO LI PO AS A GIFT

NOTE 131

And remembering Ko Hung, you are ashamed.

Ko Hung, author of "Biographies of the Gods," lived in the Fourth Century A.D.

Although very poor, he pursued his studies with such zeal that he became an official. Having heard that the cinnabar, from which the Elixir of Immortality is distilled, came from Cochin China, he begged to be appointed to a magistracy in the South in order that he might obtain a supply for experimental purposes on the spot. Arrived in Kwangtung, he spent his time on Mount Lo Po attempting to compound this elixir, and so, working at his experiments, passed into a tranquil sleep. When his friends went to wake him, they found his clothes empty. Ko Hung had ascended to the Taoist Paradise to live forever among the Immortals.

HEARING THE EARLY ORIOLE

NOTE 132

The sun rose while I slept. I had not yet risen.

The poem alludes to the curious Chinese custom of holding Imperial audiences at dawn. This custom was persisted in until the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1912. One of the most noticeable peculiarities of Peking in Imperial days was the noise during the night, which never seemed to stop. Officials came to the Palace in their carts, while it was still dark, in order to be ready for the audience at dawn. It is clear from Po Chü-i's poem that he is no longer in office, since, although the sun has risen, he himself is still in bed.

AN IMPERIAL AUDIENCE
AT DAWN

NOTE 133

At the first light of the still-concealed sun, the Cock-man, in his dark-red cap, strikes the tally-sticks and proclaims aloud the hour.

The Cock-men, whose badge of office was a red cloth, were in charge of the water-clock, and their business was to announce the time of day. Near the water-clock were kept bamboo tallies, one for each division of the twenty-four hours. (See Introduction.) When the arrow of the water-clock registered the moment of the

change from one division into another, the Cock man on duty struck the appropriate tally stick on a stone set for that purpose beside the door of the Palace. At sunrise, which took place during the hour of the monkey (three to five A.M.) or during the hour of the cock (five to seven A.M.), according to the season, he gave a loud, peculiar cry to warn the inmates of the Palace that day had come.

NOTE 134

At this exact moment, the Keeper of the Robes sends in the eider duck skin dress, with its cloud-like curving feather scales of kingfisher green.

The "Keeper of the Robes" was one of the six offices instituted by the Ch'in Dynasty (255-209 B.C.), the other five were those of the "Imperial Head dresses," "Food stuffs," "Washing Utensils," "Sitting Mats," and "Writing Materials." Robes were, and are, made from the skins of the various eider ducks found in Northern Asia. The king eider's head is blue, the Pacific eider's black and green, while the spectacled eider has a white line round the eye, which accounts for its name. The feathers are so close and soft that garments made of them feel exactly like fine fur.

NOTE 135

In the Ninth Heaven, the Ch'ang Ho Gate opens.

The Ninth Heaven is the centre from which the points of the compass radiate, and it is there that the first of all the entrances to Heaven, the Ch'ang Ho Gate, stands.

NOTE 136

The immediately arrived sun tips the "Immortal Palm."

The "Immortal Palm" was a very tall bronze pillar which the Emperor Wu of Han erected in the grounds of the Variegated Colours Palace. On the top was a colossal hand, with the fingers curled up so that the falling dew might be caught in the palm, for, of course, the ancient Chinese firmly believed that dew fell. As dew was the drinking water of the Immortals, to drink it was to advance

a step on the road to Immortality. The hand was brightly polished, and was one of the first objects about the Palace to glitter when the sun rose.

SEEKING FOR THE HERMIT
OF THE WEST HILL

NOTE 137

On the Nothing Beyond Peak, a hut of red grass

Huts were built of a certain hill grass, now very rare. It turns red in the Autumn, and is fine and strong like wire.

NOTE 138

I look into the room. There is only the low table and the stand for the elbows.

Much of the furniture in the T'ang period was like that used now by the Japanese. It was customary to sit on the floor and write at a low table, and the use of the elbow stand was general.

NOTE 139

I have received much—the whole doctrine of clear purity.

The principles of Taoism are called literally "the clear pure doctrines."

NOTE 140

Why should I wait for the Man of Wisdom?

An allusion to the eccentric Wang Hui chih (A.D. 388), who made a long journey through the snow to see a friend, but missed him.

FAREWELL WORDS TO THE
DAUGHTER OF THE HOUSE
OF YANG

NOTE 141

The sacredness with which the Chinese regard their family ties is well known, but it is perhaps not realized that the Chinese conception of the duties owed to friendship entails very great responsibilities. If a friend dies, it is a man's duty to see that his family do not suffer in any way. Wei Ying-wu is probably addressing the daughter of some dead

friend whom he has brought up in his own family, or she may be a poor relation on his mother's side, but that she is not his own daughter is clear from the fact that her clan name differs from his, which is Wei.

ONCE MORE FIELDS AND GARDENS

NOTE 142

But for thirteen years it was so I lived. The text reads "three ten," which is the way the Chinese say "thirty," but native commentaries state that it should read "ten three," or thirteen. This is far more in accordance with the facts of T'ao's life. He lived A.D. 365-427, and although he became an official, he soon resigned his post, saying that he "could not crook the hinges of his back for five pecks of rice a day." (See Note 54.)

NOTE 143

Mine is a little property of ten *mou* or so.

A *mou* is a Chinese land measurement which is equal to about one-sixth of an acre.

SONG OF THE SNAPPED WILLOW

NOTE 144

A very famous song written during the Liang Dynasty (A.D. 502-557). Allusions to it always suggest homesickness.

THE CLOUDY RIVER

NOTE 145

There seems to be no doubt that although King Hsüan of Chou (876-781 B.C.) is not mentioned by name in the poem, which appears in the "Decade of Tang" division of the "Book of Odes," he is the King referred to. All the old Chinese commentators agree in ascribing the authorship to a certain Jêng Shu, an officer of the Court during the reign of that monarch, who is known to have had a profound admiration for the King. Opinions differ as to the exact date of

the great drought, but the standard chronology places it in the sixth year of King Hsüan's reign, 812 B.C. This ode illustrates the Chinese conception of kingship described in the Introduction.

NOTE 146

How the Cloudy River glitters.

The Chinese call the Milky Way the "Cloudy" or "Silver River." Stars are peculiarly bright and glittering during a drought.

NOTE 147

My stone sceptres and round badges of rank.

The badges of office were made of nephrite. There are references in both the "Book of History" and the "Book of Odes" to the fact that, after certain sacrifices, they were buried in the ground. In this case, the sacrifices had been performed so often that the supply of these tokens was exhausted.

NOTE 148

I myself have gone from the border altars to the ancestral temples.

According to Confucius, the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth were performed at the border altars, and those to the ancestors took place at the temples especially provided for the purpose.

NOTE 149

Hou Chi could do no more.

Hou Chi is the deity of grain, and from him King Hsüan was supposed to be descended.

NOTE 150

Shang Ti does not look favourably upon us.

Shang Ti, literally the "Above Emperor," is the supreme ruler of the universe. Earthly Emperors receive the decree which empowers them to rule from him.

NOTE 151

Why should I not be terrified
Since all the ancestral sacrifices will be ended?

To the Chinese, this is the greatest calamity that can be conceived, since

without these sacrifices the ancestral spirits would suffer greatly, and might visit their wrath upon their descendants.

NOTE 152

Drought, the Demon of Drought, has caused these ravages.

The "Book of Spirits and Prodigies" states that in the Southern regions there is a hairy man, two or three cubits in height, with eyes in the top of his head and the upper part of his body bare. His name is Po. He runs with the speed of the wind, and in whatever part of the country he appears a great drought ensues.

NOTE 153

I offered the yearly sacrifices for full crops in good time.

It was the custom for the King to pray and make offerings to Shang Ti during the first Spring month (February), in order to propitiate this chief of the Chinese pantheon and ensure good harvests from the grain then being sown. During the first Winter month (November), other prayers and sacrifices were offered to the "Honoured Ones of Heaven" (the sun, moon, and stars) for a blessing on the year to follow.

NOTE 154

I neglected not one of the Spirits of the Four Quarters of the Earth.

Sacrifices of thanksgiving to the "Spirits of the Four Earth Quarters" were offered at the end of the harvest season.

SONG OF GRIEF

NOTE 155

Pan Chieh-yü, the talented and upright concubine of the Han Emperor, Ch'eng, is one of the ladies most often referred to in literature. She was supplanted by the beautiful, but unscrupulous, "Flying Swallow," who accused her to the Emperor of denouncing him to the kwei and the shên. (See table of supernatural beings in Introduction.) The Emperor, therefore, sent for Pan Chieh-yü who, kneeling before him, answered him as follows: "The Unworthy One of the

Emperor has heard that he who cultivates virtue still has not attained happiness or favour. If this be so, for him who does evil what hope is there? Supposing that the demons and spirits are aware of this world's affairs, they could not endure that one who was not faithful to the Emperor should utter the secret thoughts hidden in the darkness of his heart. If they are not conscious of this world's affairs, of what use would the uttering of those secret thoughts be?" Then, rising, she left the Imperial presence, and immediately obtained permission to withdraw from the Palace. Not long after, she sent the Emperor "A Song of Grief," and ever since then the term, "Autumn Fan," has been used to suggest a deserted wife.

LETTER OF THANKS FOR
PRECIOUS PEARLS

NOTE 156

One of the ladies swept aside by Yang Kuei-fei (see Note 30) was the lovely Chiang Ts'ai-p'in, known as the "Plum-blossom" concubine. As she liked to differ from other people, she painted her eye-brows in the shape of wide cassia-leaves instead of the thin-lined willow-leaf, or "moth-antennae," the form so much used. Soon after her departure from the Palace, some pearls were received as tribute, and the Emperor, who still had a lingering regard for "Plum-blossom," sent them to her in secret. She refused the pearls, and returned them to the Emperor with this poem.

SONGS OF THE
COURTESANS

NOTE 157

I gaze far — far — for the Seven Scents Chariot.

The "Seven Scents Chariot" was a kind of carriage used in old days by officials, and only those above the sixth rank might hang curtains upon it. It was open on four sides, but covered with a roof. The hubs of the wheels were carved. Ai Ai implies that the person she is waiting for is very grand indeed.

THE GREAT HO RIVER

NOTE 158

This song, which was probably written about 600 B.C., has been elucidated by succeeding generations of Chinese commentators in the following tale.

The lady was a daughter of the Lord of Wei, and the divorced wife of the Lord of Sung. On the death of her husband, her son succeeded to his father's position as feudal chief of Sung. Because of her divorce, the unhappy woman, who was deeply attached to her son, was forbidden to enter Sung, where he lived.

AN EVENING MEETING

NOTE 159

The lamp-flower falls.

An old-fashioned Chinese lamp was simply a vessel in which a vegetable wick floated in oil. If the oil were very pure, the wick burned evenly, leaving no charred end; but if the oil were impure, the wick turned red-hot and formed a glowing tip called the "lamp-flower." Its appearance was looked upon as the happy omen which foretold a lover's speedy return.

NOTE 160

But what is the rain of the Sorceress Gorge.

The Sorceress Gorge (see Note 87) is often referred to in a figurative sense, as it is in this poem. The allusion is to the story of a certain prince who dreamed that a fairy, calling herself the Lady of the Sorceress Mountain, came and passed the night with him. On leaving in the morning, she told him that it was she who ruled over the clouds and rain, which would ever after be symbols of their love. Since then, the expression "clouds and rain" has become a euphemism for the relation of the sexes.

CALLIGRAPHY

NOTE 161

The writing of Li Po-hai.

Li Yung (A.D. 678-747) is often called "Po Hai" in reference to a place where

he held office. He was a person who displayed astounding knowledge at a very early age, and rose to be very powerful. When he was nearly seventy, he was overthrown by the machinations of his enemies and put to death. He wrote many inscriptions and was noted for his beautiful, spirited calligraphy.

NOTE 162

The writing of Chia, the official.

Chia K'nei (A.D. 30-101) was known as the "Universal Scholar." He was an eminent teacher, and many of his pupils came from great distances. As the payment he received was in grain, he was said to "till with his tongue," which phrase has now become a current expression for earning one's living as a teacher. Toward the end of his life, he was appointed Imperial historiographer. He was also a noted calligraphist. (See Note 77.)

ONE GOES A JOURNEY

NOTE 163

Are many sweet-olive trees.

The *olea fragrans*, or sweet-olive, is employed in a metaphorical sense to denote literary honours. Scholars who have successfully passed their examinations are said to have gathered its branches.

ON THE CLASSIC OF THE
HILLS AND SEA

NOTE 164

Because the Yellow Emperor considers them of importance.

The Yellow Emperor is one of the five mythical sovereigns who ruled circa 2697 B.C. and is supposed to have reigned a hundred years.

THE SOLITARY TRAVELLER

NOTE 165

He has attended an Imperial audience at the Twelve Towers.

The "Twelve Towers" was a palace built by Ming Huang (see Note 30) for the

without these sacrifices the ancestral spirits would suffer greatly, and might visit their wrath upon their descendants.

NOTE 152

Drought, the Demon of Drought, has caused these ravages.

The "Book of Spirits and Prodigies" states that in the Southern regions there is a hairy man, two or three cubits in height, with eyes in the top of his head and the upper part of his body bare. His name is Po. He runs with the speed of the wind, and in whatever part of the country he appears a great drought ensues.

NOTE 153

I offered the yearly sacrifices for full crops in good time.

It was the custom for the King to pray and make offerings to Shang Ti during the first Spring month (February), in order to propitiate this chief of the Chinese pantheon and ensure good harvests from the grain then being sown. During the first Winter month (November), other prayers and sacrifices were offered to the "Honoured Ones of Heaven" (the sun, moon, and stars) for a blessing on the year to follow.

NOTE 154

I neglected not one of the Spirits of the Four Quarters of the Earth.

Sacrifices of thanksgiving to the "Spirits of the Four Earth Quarters" were offered at the end of the harvest season.

SONG OF GRIEF

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THE SOLITARY TRAVELLER

NOTE 165

He has attended an Imperial audience at the Twelve Towers.

The "Twelve Towers" was a palace built by Ming Huang (see Note 30) for the

use of his ladies. It was an attempted imitation of a building supposed to have been erected by the Yellow Emperor (see Note 164) for the use of the Immortals. By his reference to it, one knows that the traveller has been to Court and is returning disappointed.

SPRING. AUTUMN. WINTER

NOTE 166

It makes me think
Of the Peach-Blossom Fountain
An Allusion to a well-known allegory,

"The Peach-Blossom Fountain," by T'ao Yüan-ming. (See Note 142.) It tells how a fisherman, who was lost, found himself in a beautiful country where the people all wore strange clothes of very old-fashioned cut. On coming home, he told many stories about this enchanting land, but it could never be found again. The gods had permitted the fisherman to return for a short time to the "peach-blossom" days of his youth, although he could never remember the road he had taken, nor even point out the direction in which it lay.

A CRITICAL FABLE

A CRITICAL FABLE

There are few things so futile, and few so amusing,
As a peaceful and purposeless sort of perusing
Of old random jottings set down in a blank-book
You've unearthed from a drawer as you looked for your bank-book,
Or a knife, or a paper of pins, or some string.
The truth is, of course, you'd forgotten the thing,
And all those most vitally important matters
You'd preserved in its pages, just so many spatters
The wheel of your life kicked up in its going
Now hard as caked clay which nothing can grow in.
You raved over Browning, you discovered Euripides,
You devoured all volumes from which you could snip ideas
(No one need be surprised if I use the vernacular
Whenever it fits with my text. It's spectacular.
And what smacks of the soil is always tentacular.)—
Astronomy, botany, palaeontology —
At least you acquired their strange phrasology
And sprinkled it over your pages in splendid
Profusion because that was what learned men did.
Having one day observed daffodils in a breeze,
You remarked as a brand new impression that these
Were beautiful objects; you filled quite two pages
With extracts from all those esteemed personages
Whose sayings are found to their last adumbrations

In any respectable book of quotations.
You heard "Pelléas" and returned in a stutter
Of rainbows, and bomb-shells, and thin bread and butter;
And once every twenty odd entries or so
You recorded a fact it was worth while to know.
At least that was my blank-book, but one of the "odds"
Gave my memory two or three violent prods.
All it said was, "A gentleman taking a walk
Joined me, and we had a most interesting talk."
We certainly did, that day is as clear
As though the whole circumstance happened this year.
But when it did happen I really can't say;
The note is undated, except it says "May."
Put it, then, when you please, whether last year or next
Doesn't matter a rap, and I shall not be vexed
If you think I just dreamt it, it swings in my mind
Without root or grapple, a silvery kind
Of antique recollection, that's all I can say.
The sun shone — I remember the scattering way
It shot over the water. I stood by the river.
The plane-trees were just leaving out, and a shiver
Of sunshine and shadow twitched over the grass.
I was poking at something which glittered like glass
With my stick when he joined me and stopped, and his stick
Helped mine to dig up a long bottle-neck, thick,
Brown, and unctuous with memories of cool yellow wine
From some pre-bellum vineyard on the banks of the Rhine:

"Berncastler Doctor," perhaps, or "Rüdsheimer,"
 "Liebfraumilch" — could nomenclature
 e'er be sublimer?
 Our dear cousins German are so deftly
 romantic!
 Where else in the world could you meet
 such an antic
 Idea, such a sentiment oily to dripping?
 The pot-bellied humbugs deserved a good
 whipping,
 With their hands dropping blood and
 their noses a-sniffle
 At some beautiful thought which burns
 down to mere piffle.
 As I rubbed off the dirt (with my hand-
 kerchief mainly)
 I may have said this, for he answered
 profanely,
 "But their wine was damned good!" I
 dispensed from replying.
 His remark held a truth I was far from
 denying.
 The gentleman seemed not to notice my
 silence.
 "Could you tell me," said he, "if that
 place a short mile hence
 Is really Mt. Auburn?" I said that it was,
 And went on to observe I had never had
 cause
 To enter its precincts. "Why should
 you?" he said.
 "The living have nothing to say to the
 dead.
 The fact is entirely the other way round,
 The dead do the speaking, the living are
 wound
 In the coil of their words." Here I
 greatly demurred.
 His expression provoked me to utter
 absurd
 Refutations. "In America," I began,
 with bombast —
 "Tut! Tut!" the old gentleman smiled,
 "not so fast.
 Fold your wings, young spread-eagle, I
 merely have stated
 That the worth of the living is much
 over-rated.
 I was young once myself some few dec-
 ades ago,
 And I lived herabouts, so I really should
 know.
 This parkway, for instance, is simply
 man's cheating

Himself to believe he is once more re-
 peating
 A loveliness ruthlessly upturn and lost.
 Those motor-horns, now, do you really
 dare boast
 That they please you as marsh-larks' and
 bobolinks' songs would?
 That shaven grass shore, is it really so
 good
 As the meadows which used to be here,
 and these plane-trees,
 Are they half as delightful as those
 weather-vane trees,
 The poplars? I grant you they're quaint,
 and can please
 Like an old gouache picture of some
 Genevese
 Lake-bordering highway; but it is just
 these
 Trans-Atlantic urbanities which crowd
 out the flavour,
 The old native lushness and running-wild
 savour,
 Of mulleins, and choke-cherries in a con-
 fusion
 So dire that only small boys dared in-
 trusion;
 Beyond, where there certainly wasn't a
 shore,
 Just tufted marsh grass for an acre or
 more
 Treading shiftily into the river and
 drowned
 When the high Spring tides turned in-
 conveniently round,
 And on the tall grass-sprays, as likely as
 not,
 Red-winged blackbirds, a score of them,
 all in one spot.
 This place had the taste which a boy
 feels who grapples
 With the season's first puckery, bitter-
 green apples.
 Regardless of consequence, he devours
 and crams on
 Does maturity get the same joy from a
 daisies?
 But we, with our marshes, were more
 certainly urban
 Than you with your brummagem, gilded
 suburban,
 Which you wear like a hired theatrical
 turban.
 You move and you act like folk in a play
 All carefully drilled to walk the same way.

Just look at this bottle, we were free in
my time,
But I think you are free of nothing but
rhyme."

Now here was a thing which was not to
be stood,
Poking fun at a soul just escaped from
the wood

Like a leaf freshly burst from the bark of
its twig.

"At least," I said hotly, "we are not a
mere sprig

From an overseas' bush, and we don't
care a fig

For a dozen dead worthies of classic
humdrum,

And each one no bigger than Hop-o'-my-
thumb

To our eyes. Why, the curse of their
damned rhetoric

Hangs over our writers like a school-
master's stick."

Here I caught a few words like "the dead
and the quick."

I admit I was stung by his imperturba-
bility

And the hint in his eyes of suppressed
risibility.

"We are breaking away . . ." Here he
tossed up the bottle,

Or the poor jagged neck which was left
of the hot Hell

Container, as I think Mr. Volstead might
say.

How thankful I am I preceded his day
And remember the lovely, suave lines of
these flasks.

To piece them together will be one of
the tasks

Of thirty-third century museum curators,
Subsidized and applauded by keen legis-
lators.

It flashed in the sun for an instant or
two,

And we watched it in silence as men al-
ways do

Things that soar, then it turned and fell
in chaotic

Uprisings of spray from a sudden aquatic
Suppression beneath the waves of the
Charles.

"Yet that, like so much, is but one of the
snarls."

He dusted his fingers. "And if a man
flings

His tangles in air, there are so many
strings

To a single cat's-cradle of impulse, who
knows

When you pull at one end where the
other end goes.

We were worthy, respectable, humdrum,
quite so,

An admirable portrait of one Edgar Poe."

"Oh, Poe was a bird of a different
feather,

We always rank him and Walt Whitman
together."

"You do?" The old gentleman tugged at
his whisker.

"I could scarcely myself have imagined
a bricker

Sarcasm than that to set down in my
'Fable.'

I did what I could, but I scarcely was
able

To throw leaves of grass to Poe's raven
as sops

For his Cerberus master, who would be
mad as hops

At a hint of your excellent juxtaposition,
Since that book was not yet in its first
slim edition.

You remember I said that Poe was three
parts genius.

As to Whitman, can you think of an ac-
tion more heinous

Than to write the same book every two
or three years?

It's enough to reduce any author to tears
At the thought of this crime to the writ-
ing fraternity.

A monstrous, continual, delaying pater-
nity.

But I wax somewhat hot, let's have done
with the fellows.

Your strange estimation has made me
quite jealous

For those of my time whose secure repu-
tations

Gave us no concern. These are trifling
vexations,

But they itch my esteem. Is there really
not one

You sincerely admire?" "Yes, Miss Dick-
inson."

I hastily answered. At this he stopped
dead

In his walk and his eyes seemed to pop
from his head.

"What," he thundered, "that prim and
 perverse little person
 Without an idea you could hang up a
 verse on!
 Wentworth Higginson did what he could,
 his tuition
 Was ardent, unwearied, but bore no
 fruition.
 You amaze me, young man, where are
 Longfellow, Lowell,
 With Whittier, Bryant, and Holmes? Do
 you know well
 The works of these men? What of
 Washington Irving,
 And Emerson and Hawthorne, are they
 not deserving
 A tithe of your upstart, unfledged admir-
 ation?
 In the name of the Furies, what's come
 to the nation!"
 Here I thought it was prudent to say, as
 to prose
 I was perfectly willing to hand him the
 rose.
 But I could not admit that our poets
 were so backward.
 I thought, if he knew them, he'd see
 they'd a knack would
 Command his respect. For the matter of
 liking,
 The men he had mentioned might be
 each a Viking,
 While we, very probably, were merely the
 skippers
 Of some rather lively and smartish tea-
 clippers;
 Or, to put it in terms somewhat more
 up to date,
 Our steamers and aeroplanes might be
 first-rate
 As carriers for a particular freight.
 Each time for its heroes, and he must
 excuse
 The terms I employed, I'd not meant to
 abuse
 Our forerunners, but only to speak of a
 preference —
Anno Domini merely. So classic a refer-
 ence
 Should cool him, I thought. Here I went
 on to better a
 Most happy allusion, and continued —
et cætera.
 I will not repeat all the soothing re-
 marks

With which I endeavoured to smother
 the sparks
 Of his anger. Suffice it to say I suc-
 ceeded
 In clouding the issue of what had pre-
 ceded.
 I enjoyed it myself and I almost think he
 did.
 I admit there was something a trifle
 pragmatical
 In my method, but who wants the truth
 mathematical?
 It sours good talk as thunder does cream.
 I ignore, for the nonce, a disquieting
 gleam
 In his eye. "But your critics," he an-
 swered demurely,
 "For your poets, by-and-by; with your
 critics you surely
 Surpass what we did. I was not fond of
 critics;
 If I rightly remember, I gave them some
 sly ticks.
 I called them, I think, poor broken-
 kneed hacks."
 "We've advanced," I replied, "to the
 office boot-blacks.
 We are quite democratic, and the news-
 papers think
 One man is as good as another in ink.
 The fluid that's paid for at so much a
 sprinkling
 Is a guaranteed product, quite free of all
 inkling
 That standardized morals, and standard-
 ized criticisms,
 And a standardized series of cut-and-
 dried witticisms,
 Are poor stuff to purvey as a full reading
 ration,
 Though they suit to a T the views of a
 nation
 Which fears nothing so much as a per-
 sonal equation.
 Subscribers demand that their thoughts
 be retailed to them
 So often and plenteously that they be-
 come nailed to them
 And when travelling are lost if their
 journal's not mailed to them.
 By this safe and sane rule our newspapers
 get on
 Without any gambling, since there's
 nothing to bet on.
 Of course I refer to things of import

Such as stock-exchange news, murders,
fashions, and sport,
With a smattering of politics, garbled to
fit
Editorial policy; if they admit
Puerilities like music and art, these are
extras
Put in to augment, by means of a dex-
terous
Metropolitan appearance, their own cir-
culation,
For a paper's first duty is self-preserva-
tion.
If they will run book columns, why some
one must feed them,
And, after all, few take the trouble to
read them.
With a pastepot and scissors to cut up his
betters
And any young numskull is equal to
letters.
He scans what the publisher says on the
jacket,
Then the first paragraph and the last,
and the packet
Goes off to the second-hand book-shop,
the bunch
Polished off in the minutes he's waiting
for lunch.
I believe there's no record of any one
feeling
As he pockets his pay that he may have
been stealing.
The thing would be murder, but that
time has gone by
When an author can be made or marred
by such fry.
Some good paper is spoiled, that's the
long and the short of it."
Here I watched the old gentleman to see
what he thought of it.
"There reviews which you speak of have
one great advantage,"
He remarked, "they are brief. In our
less petulant age
They had not that merit. But I see we
agree
On essentials. Yet we had a very few
men
Who wielded a passably powerful pen."
"And one woman," I slyly put in. He
grimaced.
"That's the second you've dug up and
greatly displaced.
Since you criticize thus, do I err if I doubt

Whether you are the boot-black on his
afternoon out?"
Fairly touched and I owned it, and let
Margaret Fuller
Slide softly to limbo. 'Twas unmanly to
rule her
Out of count in this way, but the fish I
must fry
Required considerable diplomacy
'To keep in the pan and not drop in the
fire.
"Twas an expert affair, and might shortly
require
I knew not what effort to induce him to
grant
That whatever we are is worth more than
we aren't.
So I instantly seized on his "very few
men"
And assured him that we also, now and
again,
Found a youth who was willing to write
good reviews
While learning to tickle the publishers'
views
And make them believe he was worth
while to back.
"The thing after all is a question of
knack,
Ten to one if you have it you turn out a
quack;
If you don't, and win through, you've
arrived without doubt,
But the heck's on your side if you're not
quite worn out."
"Good old world," he remarked, as he
prodded the ground
With the point of his cane, "I observe it
goes round
In the same soothing, punctual way.
This pastiche
Of the quite unfamiliar is merely a bleach,
A veneer, acid-bitten, on a colour we
knew.
By the way, when it's finished, who reads
your review?"
"The fellow who wrote it, on all those
occasions
When his fine self-esteem has received
some abrasions.
Then the fellow who's written about
cons the thing
Over several times in a day till the sting
Of its strictures becomes just the usual
pedantic

Outpouring, and its granules of praise
 grow gigantic.
 Once acquire this excellent trick for
 benumbing
 What you don't want to hear by an extra
 loud strumming
 On the things which you do and you
 fast are becoming
 A real going author. Then there are the
 gentry
 Who must read reviews to fill out an
 entry
 In next week's advertisement; and others
 penise
 The paper with care to note down its
 abuse
 Of their dear brother writer, and suck up
 each injurious
 Phrase to retail with a finely luxurious
 Hypocritical pretense of its being unsuit-
 able,
 While all the time showing it quite
 irrefutable.
 Then there are the sisters, and cousins,
 and aunts
 Of the writer and wrote about; some
 sycophants
 Who pry into favour by announcing
 they've read it,
 And praise or deride to heighten their
 credit
 With the interested person. There are
 others who edit
 Gossip columns, and who must go
 through at a dead-heat
 The news of the day for the spicy tid-
 bits
 And who greatly prefer the more virulent
 hits.
 By the time we are through, a fairly
 large public
 Has skimmed through the paper." He
 gave a quick flick
 To a stone which arose with a circular
 twist
 And plopped into the river. "But if I
 insist
 On your people of parts?" "Oh, they
 do not exist,"
 I assured him, "or only as sparsely as
 daisies
 In city back-yards. And if one of them
 raises
 His voice it is drowned in the whirligig
 hazes

Of mob murmurings. If these men hold
 the key
 To the spacious demesne known as pos-
 terity
 The gate must have shrunk to a postern,
 I think.
 Every one worth his salt glues his eye to
 the chink
 "Twixt the frame and the door, but it's
 long to keep looking
 With never a chance to get even a hook
 in
 And pull open a door where it's 'Skele-
 tons Only.'
 A notice designed to make any one lonely.
 It stares over the gate in huge letters of
 red:
 'No person admitted until he is dead.'
 Small wonder if some of them cannot
 hold out.
 As they dwindle away, the watchers, no
 doubt,
 Feel a sort of cold envy creep through
 their contempt.
 Then perhaps the door opens and one
 is exempt,
 Gone over to dust and to fame. As it
 slams,
 The requiem fraternal, a chorus of
 'Damns!'
 Cracks the silence a moment. More still
 break away,
 But the shrivelled remainder waits each
 one his day.
 It takes marvellous force and persistence
 to tarry on
 When your own special corpse may be
 counted as carrion
 And left where it lies to await decom-
 posing
 While that devilish door shows no sign
 of unclosing.
 These custodians of keys are ill to rely on
 As the last Day of Judgment to the fol-
 lowers of Zion.
 There are folk who dress up in the very
 same guise
 And boast of a power that's nothing but
 lies.
 They shout from their chosen, particular
 steeple
 Of some weekly review: 'We are surely
 the people!
 We know what posterity wants, for we
 know

What other posterities have wanted, and
^{so}
 We affirm confidently the true cut and
 fashion
 Which the future will certainly dote on
 with passion.
 There is no need at all of making a fuss
 For all generations are exactly like us.
 We represent that which is known as the
 Vox
Populi, species *Intelligentsia*, or Cocks
 Of the Walk on the Dunghill of High
 Erudition,
 Referred to more elegantly as Fields
 Elysian.
 The matter of clocks may be readily
 dropped.
 Every Ph.D. knows that they long ago
 stopped.
 What are colleges for with their dignified
 massiveness
 But just to reduce all time-pieces to
 passiveness."
 "The picture you draw does not greatly
 attract
 One who seeks for the absolute even in
 fact.
 That fanciful bit you put in about clocks
 Borders rather too smartly upon paradox.
 We had a few poets, and we had a few
 colleges,
 And something like half of your bundle
 of knowledges.
 We delivered our lectures and wrote our
 lampoons,
 And I venture to say that the fire-balloons
 Of our verse made as lively a sputter as
 yours.
 If things are so changed, what, pray, is
 the cause?"
 I groaned. Poor old gentleman, should I
 be tempted
 To tell him the fault was that he had
 preempted,
 He and the others, the country's small
 stock
 Of imagination? The real stumbling-block
 Was the way they stood up like Blake's
 angels, a chorus
 Of geniuses over our heads, no more
 porous
 Than so much stretched silk; rain, sun,
 and the stellar
 Effulgences balked by our national um-
 brella

Of perished celebrities. To mention a
 trifling
 Fact, underneath them the air's somewhat
 stifling.
 Youthful lungs need ozone and, con-
 sidering the tent,
 No man can be blamed if he punches a
 rent
 With his fist in the stiff, silken web if he
 can.
 A feat, I assured him, more horrible than
 Cataclysmic tide-waters or Vesuvian
 Explosions to all those quaint, straightly-
 faced folk
 Who allow a man only the freedom to
 choke.
 "We may buckle the winds and rip open
 the sea,
 But we mayn't poke a finger at authority."
 "A nursery game," the old man spoke
 benignly,
 "To all school-boys, convention's a matter
 divinely
 Ordained, and the youngster who feels
 himself bold enough
 To step out of the ring will soon find
 himself cold enough.
 To be chips from a hardened old tree
 may be crippling,
 But it's nothing compared to the lot of
 the stripling.
 For the sake of the argument, let us
 agree
 That we were the last surge of life which
 the tree
 Could produce, that our heart-wood was
 long ago rotted,
 Our sap-wood decaying, and all our roots
 spotted
 With fungus; the Spring of our flourish-
 ing over,
 The first Winter storm would most likely
 have rove a
 Great cleft through the trunk, and the
 next year's out-leaving
 Would unbalance the whole without
 hope of retrieving.
 The gentlest of breezes would then send
 it crashing.
 Good luck to the striplings if they escape
 smashing.
 When an oak, having lasted its time, is
 once thrown,
 What is left are the acorns it cast, and
 these grown

Are the forest of saplings in which it lies
prone.
But 'twould be a dull acorn who should
dare to declare
It was sprung only from earth's connec-
tion with air,
The miraculous birth of a marvellous nut.
Such an acorn indeed would be a poor
nut."
He quickened his steps and I followed
along,
Listening partly to him, and partly to the
song
Of the little light leaves in the plane-
trees. Said he,
Stopping short quite abruptly, "I think
it should be
Somewhere about here that a house I
once knew
Used to stand. It was not much to look
at, 'tis true,
But its elms were superb and it had a
fine view
Of the river. A friend of mine owned it,
indeed
He was born here and loved every tree,
every weed.
Circumstance loosed his moorings, but
he came back to die,
To envisage the past with a chill, older
eye,
And dwelt a few years with the bitter-
sweet ghosts
Of his earlier dreams, with the shadowless
hosts
Of the things he had never brought
farther than planning.
How often he wished there were some
way of spanning
The past and the present, to go back
again
And drink to the dregs the austere cup of
pain.
Instead, he allowed the nepenthe of
change
To smother that loneliness by which the
range
Of his soul might have reached to some
highest achievement
Through the vision won out of a grievous
bereavement.
He'd a wit and a fancy, a hint of some
deepness,
An excellent humour quite unmarred by
cheapness,

But somehow his work never got beyond
soundings.
I wonder sometimes if it was his sur-
roundings
Or the fact that he fled them. With a
grim taciturnity,
He admitted no masterpiece owed its
paternity
To him. Now they've pulled down his
house, I suppose.
Thistles spring up and die, and the thistle-
down goes
Anywhere the wind blows it." "Wait,"
I said, "if you mean
James Lowell's house, 'Elmwood,' you
can see it between
That brick porch and that window, and
those are its chimneys.
The grounds are cut up and built over,
their trimness
Is due to that cluster of very new
houses.
In its rather bedraggled condition, it
rouses
My ire each time I come anywhere near
it.
It deserved better treatment." "I fear it!
I fear it!"
He murmured. "Was it lack of success,
or those years
I spent in escaping the tonic arrears
Of a grief not lived through. I cannot
bear more."
He turned and walked rapidly down to
the shore
Of the river and seated himself on the
bank.
Many minutes went by, then he asked
me point-blank
Who were the young poets of the day.
"Since my mood
Will admit no more sorrowful past, be
so good
As to marshal your forces, I shall find it
quite pleasant
To stroll for a little with you in the
present.
So bring them out, lock, stock, and barrel,
the whole of them,
I'm really most anxious to get a good toll
of them.
Recount me their merits, their foibles
and absurdities,
Such a tale is too saccharine without
some acerbities."

His gesture of challenge was so debonaire

I could only accept with as devil-may-care
A grace as I could. But our Ostrogothic
Modern manners, I fear, made me seem
sans-culottic.

I know that I felt supremely idiotic.
Still "out of the mouths of the babes and
the sucklings,"

And I was prepared with some brave
ugly ducklings

I was willing to swear would prove to be
swans,

Or, to tone up the metaphor, Bellerophonous.

At least they'd no fear of a chase round
the paddock

After Pegasus, who "might be lamed by
a bad hock

And so easily mounted" — I can hear
the malicious

Sneers of the critics when one dare be
ambitious

And attempt a bold thing, yet it's hard
to decry a

Flight its existence when above you the
flyer

Is gyrating and plunging on his way to
the zenith,

And he grins the best who at the last
grinneth.

But my unknown old friend seemed to
need no acquainting

With this style of horseflesh, he would
notice my painting,

No chance then at all to confuse him by
feinting.

I must prove that my horse had his quota
of wings,

Was sound wind and limb, that his sidles
and swings

Were no circus parade, that the man who
would stride him

Knew perfectly well why he wanted to
ride him.

That 'twas bareback or die, that the
fellow was game

For whichever result was the end of his
aim.

As I pondered, I harboured no little
aversion

At having embarked on so great an ex-
cursion,

Nothing less, be it said, than his total
conversion.

"Come, come," he urged quickly, "you're
taking some time

To trot out your up-to-date dabblers in
rhyme."

I pouted, I think. "Ha! Ha! you're
offended!

Because I said 'dabblers' or because I
pretended

Not to know that rhyme's lost its erst-
while predominance?"

I assured him at once that we gave no
prominence

To rhyme or the lack of it. To which
he said "Good!

We've got somewhere at last; now let's
have the whole brood

In their rareness and rawness. I am
surely no prude,

I shall not be satisfied if you exclude
Any atom of character, any least mood.

Give your men as you see them from
their toes to their chin.

Only, for God's sake, my dear fellow,
begin."

Since he and I wanted the same thing
exactly,

I started to put it quite matter-of-factly.
He had spoken of acorns, so poets in a
nutshell

Should please him, I thought, and they're
none of them but shell.

To hesitate longer would smack of the
boyish,

And a prophet's ill served by an attitude
coyish.

Like a diffident girl asked to play the
piano.

I detest all such feminine ruses, and
so

I hitched up my mind as sailors and
whalers

Are reported to do with their trousers
(why tailors

Should so fashion these garments that
this act must precede

Every truly stupendous and heroic deed
I am quite at a loss to surmise).

To continue,

I exerted each muscle and braced every
sinew

For the duty in hand. In a fiery burst
Which I hoped might be eloquence, I

took up the first
Poet I happened to think of, explaining
quite clearly

That my order of precedence meant nothing really.

Number ten might be easily rated as equal
To one or fifteen, if we lived for the sequel.

Here I saw with concern he had fixed
both his eyes on

That soothing Nirvana we call the horizon.

There was danger of slumber I felt, so
embarking

On my story with gusto, I began by remarking

(And here I must add for my just self-esteem

That the minute I spoke he awoke from
his dream

And never thereafter did so much as
blink,

Though I thought, once or twice, I
detected a wink.)

But I'm straying again. I remarked then
succinctly,

Without farther preamble:

"To name them distinctly,
There's Frost with his blueberry pastures and hills

All peopled by folk who have so many
ills

'Tis a business to count 'em, their subtle
insanities.

One half are sheer mad, and the others
inanities.

He'll paint you a phobia quick as a wink
Stuffed into a hay-mow or tied to a
sink.

And then he'll deny, with a certain rich
rapture,

The very perversion he's set out to capture.

Were it not for his flowers, and orchards,
and skies,

One would think the poor fellow was
blind of both eyes

Or had never read Freud, but it's only
his joke.

If we're looking for cheer, he's a pig
in a poke.

But he's such a good chap, he is welcome to say

Tweddledum's Tweddleddee if he's feeling
that way.

When he calls a thing yellow and you
know it is pink,

Why, you've purchased his book and
you're welcome to think.

He's a foggy benignity wandering in space
With a stray wisp of moonlight just
touching his face,

Descending to earth when a certain condition

Reminds him that even a poet needs
nutrition,

Departing thereafter to rarefied distances
Quite unapproachable to those persistencies,

The lovers of Lions, who shout at his
tail —

At least so he says — when he comes
within hail.

Majestic, remote, a quite beautiful pose,
(Or escape, or indulgence, or all three,
who knows?)

Set solidly up in a niche like an oracle
Dispensing replies which he thinks categorical.

No wonder he cleaves to his leafy seclusion,

Barricading his door to unlawful intrusion,

The goal of the fledgling, a god in a
thicket,

To be viewed only Tuesdays and Fridays
by ticket.

Yet note, if you please, this is but one
degree

Of Frost, there are more as you'll presently see,

And some of them are so vexatiously
teasing

All this stored heat is needed to keep
him from freezing.

Life is dreadfully hard on a man who
can see

A rainbow-clad prophet a-top of each
tree;

To whom every grass-blade's a telephone
wire

With Heaven as central and electrifier.
He has only to ring up the switch-board
and hear

A poem lightly pattering into his ear,
But he must be in tune or the thing takes
a kink,

An imminent lunch-bell puts it all on
the blink.

Some one to be seen in the late afternoon
Throws all his poetical thoughts in a
swoon.

He can't walk with one foot on Parnas-
sus, and stutter
Along with the other foot deep in the
gutter,
As many poets do, all those who have
timely
Submitted to life as men live it, and
languely
Continue to limp, half man-in-the-street,
Half poet-in-the-air. How often we meet
Such fellows, they throng the bohemian
centres,
'The 'Blue Cats' and 'Pink Moons' those
artistic frequenters
Who eat at the house's expense for the
fame
Their presence ensures have conceived
as a name
Full of rich innuendo. Though why a
strange hue
Connected with something — moons pink
or cats blue —
Should make it so vicious, I can't see,
can you?
These double-paced bardlings are marvels
at talking,
But their writing seems curiously given
to balking,
A result, like as not, of their manner of
walking.
Not so Frost, he divides his life into two
pieces,
Keeping one for himself while the other
he leases
To various colleges. He's eclectic in
choice
And at least half-a-dozen have cause to
rejoice
That he's sojourned among them; for his
unique duty,
What they pay him to do and regard as
their booty,
Is the odd one of being on hand, nothing
more.
He's an unexplored mine you know con-
tains ore;
Or rather, he acts as a landscape may
do
Which says one thing to me and another
to you,
But which all agree is a very fine view.
Such a sight is experience, a wonderful
thing
To have looked at and felt. This estab-
lishing

Of a poet in a college like a bird in a
cage
Is a happy endowment for art which our
age
Is the first to have thought of and made
quite the rage.
That the poet cannot function while
kept as a zoo,
Does not matter at all to the wisecracs
who
Invented the scheme. They secure for
the year
That desideratum, a high atmosphere.
If the poet who provides it be chained to
the pith,
That is nothing to leaving their college
a myth,
A tradition, to hand down to all future
classes.
A thing and its shadow are one to the
masses.
The man's written his poems, now he
can recite them;
As for new ones, he is a great fool to
invite them,
Notoriety offers a constant repose,
Like a time-honoured rose-bush which
now bears no rose.
Instead of one poet, we've a score of
poetasters.
Are we wise in our method or ignorant
wasters?
Frost suffers himself to be bled for the
small fry
While Pegasus, never a quiescent palfrey,
Stamps at the hitching-post. Still, I'm
not saying
There is really much harm in this lengthily
delaying.
There's the other half-year and his tele-
graph grasses
And no college thrives on a diet of asses;
A man must be sacrificed now and again
To provide for the next generation of
men.
So if, once in a while, a real poet is
captured
And bled for the future, we should all
be enraptured.
The violence done to his own special
nature
Is a thing of no moment if he add to the
stature
Of a handful of students, and business
is booming

For the troubadour poets in the town
 he's illuming.
 They come, called in shoals by the inter-
 est he rouses,
 And talk of themselves to preposterous
 houses.
 But who, in the end, has the best of the
 luck,
 The migrating birds or the poor decoy
 duck?
 Small surprise, when Commencement
 has ended the year,
 If our poet's first free action is to dis-
 appear.
 Chained up on a campus creating diurnal
 Poetic fine weather must be an eter-
 nal
 Annoyance, a horror, growing always more
 biting.
 How pleasant his mountains must look,
 how exciting
 The long leisured moments to think, with
 no gaping
 Importunate youths whose lives he is
 shaping
 Forever observing his least little move-
 ment.
 Why, a bleak desert island would be an
 improvement
 On such an existence. Though we should
 be proud
 That there is such a man to let loose on
 a crowd
 Of young bears, any one of whom may
 become President,
 We should be even prouder to know
 him a resident
 Of our woods and our hills, a neighbour
 of neighbours,
 A singer of country-sides and country
 labours,
 Like a hermit thrush deep in a wood
 whose fresh fire
 Of song burns the whole air to music,
 and higher
 Up-soars till it seems not one voice but
 a choir—
 The choir of his people whose hearths
 are the altars
 Of that deep race-religion which in him
 never falters,
 His life is its worship, his songs are its
 psalters.
 Prophet, seer, psalmist, is the world so
 importunate

As to leave you no peace even here?
 You are fortunate
 At least to abide, remote as the fables,
 In a place much neglected by railroad
 time-tables.
 I promise, for one, when I turn from the
 wicket,
 That the name of your town will not be
 on my ticket.
 You have as much right to protect your
 seclusion
 As any old monk of the order Carthusian,
 Though solitude really is but an illusion
 As most men find out to their utter con-
 fusion.

To speak of seclusion is to think of a
 man
 Who is built on a totally otherwise plan.
 I mean, and I rather imagine you know
 it,
 Edwin Arlington Robinson, excellent poet,
 And excellent person, but vague as a wood
 Gazed into at dusk. His preponderant
 mood
 Is withdrawal, and why? For a man of
 his stamp,
 So conscious of people, it seems odd to
 scamp
 Experience and contact, to live in a
 hollow
 Between the four winds and perpetually
 swallow
 The back draughts of air from a swift
 forward motion.
 It takes a huge strength to withstand
 all emotion,
 But Robinson stays with his feet planted
 square
 In the middle of nothing, the vacuum
 where
 The world's swinging starts and whirls
 out, where is left
 The dead root of movement, an empti-
 ness cleft
 In the heart of an aim, of all aims, peering
 out
 At the dust and the grass-blades that
 swirl all about.
 He notes who is here, who is coming
 along,
 Who has passed by alone, who is one
 of a throng.
 He peers with intentness bent all into
 seeing,

A critical eye finely pointed on being.
 He is cruel with dispassion, as though
 he most dreaded
 Some shiver of feeling might yet be
 imbedded
 Within him. And if this occurrence
 should happen,
 He would probably see himself with a
 fool's cap on
 And feel himself sinking to shipwreck at
 once;
 (Of the two, much preferring disaster to
 dunce.
 For the dunce is contingent on a sort of
 a curse
 He thinks he is doomed with. A curious,
 perverse
 Undercutting of Fate which decrees him
 observer
 And hoods him in ice from all possible
 fervour.
 The slightest conceivable hint of a thaw
 Wounds his conscience as though he had
 broken a law
 He had sworn to uphold. Are there
 demons in hiding
 Within his ice-mail? Can he feel them
 abiding
 A time to break loose and disrupt into
 tatters
 The scheme of existence he has taught
 himself matters,
 A barrier raised betwixt him and his
 satyrs?
 For he has them; his quaint, artificial
 control
 Is a bandage drawn tightly to hold down
 his soul.
 Should a nail or a thorn tear the least
 little mesh, it
 Would let all his nature go leaping in
 freshet
 Overflowing his banks and engulfing his
 dams
 In a flurry of life. But the desolate calms
 He has cherished so long would be lost
 in the slams,
 The torrential vortices of a swift current
 Exploding in motion. Some uncouth,
 deterrent
 Complex in his make-up enforces recoil
 Before the fatigue and the wrench of
 turmoil.
 He compounds with inertia by calling
 it Fate,

Deeply dreading the rush of emotion in
 spate,
 Distrusting his power to outwit disaster
 In the realization that with him fast
 means faster,
 And refusing to see that a turbulent strife
 Is the valuable paradox given to life
 Which only the few may possess. With
 the prize
 In his hand, he turns sadly away, crucifies
 His manhood each day with the old
 dog's-eared lies,
 The heritage, left by those Puritan heirs.
 His hogies and satyrs are grandsons of
 theirs.
 Could he see them as fruit-trees distorted
 by mist,
 He might unknot himself from the terrible
 twist
 He has suffered through fear of them.
 Now, with vicarious
 Experience in verse, he cheats all the
 various
 Impulses within him which make him a
 poet;
 But, try as he will, his poems all show
 it.
 His tight little verses an inch in diameter,
 His quatrains and whole-book-long tales
 in pentameter,
 With never a hint of what he'd call a
 sham metre —
 Though some people style his kind *ad*
nauseam metre —
 With gimlets for eyes and a sensitive
 heart,
 All battened down tight in the box of
 his art,
 And we have his rare merits and his
 strange deficiencies
 Which mix to a porridge of peculiar
 efficiencies.
 Admired by every one dowered with wit,
 He has scarcely the qualifications to hit
 The unlettered public, but the fact that
 his name
 Is already spotted with the lichens of
 fame
 Opens up a most fecund and pertinent
 query
 And is one of the pedestals on which my
 theory
 Is based; whether now we have not
 reached the stage
 Of a perfectly genuine coming-of-age.

I am willing to swear that when he has retired
 His books will be listed as 'reading required,'
 And poor sweltering youths taking examinations
 Will crown him with the bays of their wild lamentations.
 Our beautiful system is to make every course able
 To render delight quite sterile through forcible
 Insistence upon it. But these are the laurels
 With which no man who's not insane ever quarrels.
 Perhaps it's as well not to look at the guerdon
 'Too closely or no one would shoulder the burden
 Of being a poet.

The next I shall take up
 Is a fellow as utterly different in make-up
 As you're likely to see if you scour the land
 With field-glasses and microscopes. This is Carl Sand-
 burg, a strange, gifted creature, as slow as a fog
 Just lifting to sunshine, a roughly hewn Gog,
 Shorn of his twin Magog, set over the portal
 Through which brawls the stream of everything mortal.
 Day and night he observes it, this river of men,
 With a weary-sweet, unflagging interest, and ten
 Times in a day he seeks to detach himself
 From the plinth where he's destined to watch,
 And mingle as one of them, mistaking his stature
 'To be but that generally ordained by nature
 For the run of humanity. His miscalculations
 Of the possible height to which civilizations
 May rightly aspire are constantly leading him
 Into positions whence there's no proceeding.
 Because he can easily reach to the stars,
 He cannot believe that a short arm debars

Any others from doing the same, and declares
 His qualifications assuredly theirs. Endowing each man whom he meets with his own
 Stretch and feeling, he takes for the foundation stone
 Of his creed the ability to walk cheek by jowl
 With the sun, at the same time not losing control
 Of feet always set on the earth. It is droll
 To hear him announce neither giants nor pigmies
 Exist, that there's only one knowable size,
 Which by implication's as tall as the skies.
 What he feels about souls, he has brought into speech,
 But since perfect English is a hard thing to teach
 To those brought up without it, he changes his tactics
 And declares correct use the hypochondriatics
 Of language too timid for red-blooded slang.
 This theory of his is a swift boomerang
 Overturning his balance and flooring him pell-mell, he
 Presents the strange sight of a man on his belly
 Proclaiming that all men walk that way from preference
 And the manner, though new, must be treated with deference.
 Since his own natural speech is correct to a dot,
 His theory, to use the red-blooded, is 'rot.'
 And as man does not wiggle along like a jelly
 When he walks, to affect that laid flat on the belly
 Is the easiest position to attain locomotion
 Must surely be called a preposterous notion.
 But what's the poor fellow to do? It is plain
 He overtops folk if he stands; once again
 It's the hill and Mohammed, since he can't raise the others

He must lie if he'd be the same height
 as his brothers.
 It may weary his readers to see a true
 poet
 Who apparently has not the instinct to
 know it,
 And so burdens his beauty with wild
 propaganda
 That much of his work is a hideous
 slander
 Against his remarkable genius, but scratch
 it
 With a prudent pen-knife and there's
 nothing to match it
 Going on in the whole world to-day. He
 has sight
 Of a loveliness no man has seen, and a
 might,
 A great flowing power of words to express
 Its hugeness and littleness. All the excess
 Of his passion for living leaps out from
 his pen
 In a gush of fresh imminence; again and
 again
 We read him to fill our soul's withering
 lungs
 With the wind-over-water sweep which
 is his tongue's
 Particular gift — though I should have
 said 'prairies,'
 Not 'water,' he is no result of the seas,
 But in every whiff of him, flat and ex-
 tended,
 A man of the plains, whose horizons are
 ended
 By the upreach of earth to that sky which
 he touches
 And carries off great fragments of in his
 clutches.
 Wood-smoke, and water-smoke rising from
 runnels
 At sunrise, long lines of black smoke from
 the funnels
 Of engines and factories, steel of man's
 forging
 And steel he's forged into; the slow,
 passive gorging
 Of earth with mankind, blood of souls,
 blood of hearts,
 Swallowed into the fields where the
 sprouting grain parts
 A right rail from a left rail, and always
 asunder
 Go marching the fields cleft in two by
 the wonder

Of man gauging distance as magic and
 burning it
 Under boot-heels or car-wheels and all
 the time earning it
 For the silt of his mind from which a
 new soil
 Is gradually risen. This turgescient coil
 Is the crawling of glaciers, the upheave
 of hills,
 The process of making and change, the
 huge spills
 Of watersheds seeking their oceans, the
 miracle
 Of creeping continuance. This is the
 lyrical
 Stuff Sandburg works into something as
 lazy
 And deep as geology planting its clays, he
 Makes keenly, unhastingly, as evolution,
 And yet, poor blind eagle, he dreams
 revolution.
 With the centuries his if he could but
 decide
 To pocket his picayune, popular pride,
 Give up his day-dreams and his tin-penny
 logic,
 Be Gog as God made him and not dema-
 gogue,
 Sit solidly down with his eyes and his
 heart,
 And a file and a chisel, to fashion great
 art —
 If he would, but will he? It really is
 vexing
 To see such a fellow perpetually flexing
 His knees to false idols, a mere artizan
 When he might be an artist. Some his-
 torian
 Of the future will round him up in an
 abstract
 By denouncing the times as too matter-
 of-fact,
 Not observing what might well be seen
 for the looking
 That it's simply a case of not quite
 enough cooking.
 An accredited hero or a dream-blinded
 sloven
 Is entirely a matter of stoking the oven.
 The material's certainly A number one,
 It will be his own fault if he dies under-
 done.
 The man whom I next shall bring to the
 fore

Is becoming, I fear, an impossible bore.
 Some few years ago, Minerva mislaid
 Her glasses, and unable to see in the
 shade,
 Feeling also, quite naturally, rather afraid
 To proclaim that she wore them, like any
 old maid
 Teaching school — for a Goddess is loath
 to parade
 Her antiquity, even as others — she said
 No word of the matter at home on
 Olympus.
 A pity, because a very bad *impasse*
 Might have so been averted. The hand-
 maids and lackeys,
 Who are always possessed of both front
 door and back keys,
 Would have hunted the palace from
 cellar to roof
 And most probably found them not very
 aloof
 From the spot where poor Vulcan, in
 playing Tartuffe,
 Had received a convincing and permanent
 proof
 That the lady was chaste. Indeed, how-
 ever frigid,
 No woman of spirit admits to the rigid
 Mathematical count of the years after
 forty,
 And even immortals, though reputed
 quite 'sporty,'
 And figuring time by the so many cen-
 turies,
 Still scarcely desire to add up the entries
 And publish the total. Minerva, then,
 hid
 The fact that she could not quite see
 what she did,
 And since it would give things away to
 inquire, 'Oh
 She could not do that!' And after a
giro
 Which blindly confused every main street
 and by-row,
 In the end she conferred a great book
 on a tyro.
 The author in question, though an excel-
 lent notary,
 Could scarcely be classed at that time as
 a votary
 Worth Minerva's attention. But, however
 unsuitable,
 The deed, once accomplished, became
 quite immutable.

No matter how foolish she felt, the poor
 Goddess
 Must carry it through in a pitiless prog-
 ress.
 For be sure, when her family learnt of
 her blunder,
 Which they very soon did, she'd have
 welcomed Jove's thunder
 To be quit of his really abominable quiz-
 zing.
 His jokes were caught up by Neptune
 and sent whizzing
 For Vulcan to cap them, and as he was
 still smarting
 Beneath the rebuke she'd not spared him
 at parting,
 He gave her good measure now he'd got
 the upper
 Hand. Then the women joined in; what
 at supper
 Was observed was relished for break-
 fast and dinner,
 Even Venus said 'Minnic, you *have*
 picked a winner!
 From all that I hear, your man is verbose.
 He'll print in ten volumes, a very large
 dose
 For you to inspire.' 'Oh, Minnie is
 game,'
 Cried Mercury, kind-hearted boy. 'All
 the same,'
 Growled Vulcan, 'if Min can hold out,
 'twould be speedier
 To imbue him at once with an ency-
 clopedia.'
 Here Minerva, in tears which begemmed
 her found glasses,
 Declared her relations were all of them
 asses,
 That she cared not a fig for their tup-
 penny threats
 Having settled the book to be done in
 vignettes.
 The Gods broke out laughing. 'Give
 Minnie the handle
 And not one of you is worth even her
 sandal,'
 Shouted Jove, 'she's arranged for a suc-
 cès de *scandal*.'
 Which she had, and her poet, never
 doubting the giver,
 Wrote steadily on without the least
 quiver,
 And at last, in due course, was pub-
 lished 'Spoon River.'

Now having explained the volume's true
genesis,
Let me say it is not for a party where
tennis is
In order, or bridge. If you like porcupine-
pinning
Your soul with your conscience, here's
a chance for refining
On misery, and since Minerva'd a hand
in it
No person need doubt that there's plenty
of sand in it.
Of course the thing's genius no matter
how squint-eyed,
And the reader who never once weeps
must be flint-eyed.
But hey, Mr. Masters, how weary and
dreary
You make all your folk! How impossibly
smeary
And sticky they are with old amorous
contacts,
A series of ticketed, sexual facts
Tucked away, all unwashed, in the
ground. Who once told you
The great, biological truths with a few
Dirty smudges you've never forgotten, like
plasters
Thumbed tight to your mind? They're
the trade-mark of 'Masters.'
Whatever he's writing — Minerva inspired
As this book, 'Spoon River'; or, nervous
and tired,
Worrying his public as a dog does a bone
As in 'Domesday Book,' done, you'll
agree, quite alone —
They all have the stamp of back-alley
lust
Which you stand as you can, for stand
it you must
If you'd read him at all. I've no wish
to cloud over
The fame of a book which, from cover
to cover,
Shows the trace of Minerva's most help-
ful collusion.
The hall-marks of genius are here in pro-
fusion.
People swarm through its pages like ants
in a hill,
No one's like the others, a personal will
Makes each man what he is and his life
what it was.
'The modern Balzac' Not at all — the
new 'Boz!'

Where the Frenchman employed an
urbane moderation,
The Englishman gloried in exaggeration.
But, in spite of his gargoyles, his fine
gift of humour
Kept even his quaintness from the taint
of ill-humour.
In a grin of delight, he played tricks
with his drawing,
And no matter how far from the real he
was yawing
His object were merely a louder guffaw-
ing.
He never believed his grotesques were
true pictures
Of life, he knew perfectly well men are
mixtures
Of rather more this or a little less that;
No man is pure angel and none is sheer
brat.
Where he painted them so, it was done
to enhance
Some meaning he wished to make clear;
circumstance
Induced him to stress both the gall and
the honey,
And no one knew better just when to be
funny.
Mr. Masters, quite otherwise, thinks his
creations
Reveal abstract truth in their vilest rela-
tions.
He sees every one as the suffering
prey
Of some low, hidden instinct, his business
to flay
The decency off them and show them all
naked,
A few of them zanies, the rest downright
wicked.
In all his vast gallery there's but one
exception,
And that, I hold, is to have wrought
with deception.
If some excellent sense of the really
amusing
Had led him to practise a little more
fusing
Of the good and the bad, his book had
succeeded
In being the great masterpiece we have
needed
Ever since the beginning. As it is, his
caprice
Has given us only a great Masters' piece.

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 Was observed was rehashed for break-
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 sandal,'
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 cès de scandale*.'
 Which she had, and her poet, never
 doubting the giver,
 Wrote steadily on without the least
 quiver,
 And at last, in due course, was pub-
 lished 'Spoon River.'

Now having explained the volume's true genesis,
 Let me say it is not for a party where tennis is
 In order, or bridge. If you like porcupining
 Your soul with your conscience, here's a chance for refining
 On misery, and since Minerva'd a hand in it
 No person need doubt that there's plenty of sand in it.
 Of course the thing's genius no matter how squint-eyed,
 And the reader who never once weeps must be flint-eyed.
 But hey, Mr. Masters, how weary and dreary
 You make all your folk! How impossibly sneaky
 And sticky they are with old amorous contacts,
 A series of ticketed, sexual facts
 Tucked away, all unwashed, in the ground. Who once told you
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 Thumbed tight to your mind? They're the trade-mark of 'Masters.'
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 Worrying his public as a dog does a bone
 As in 'Domesday Book,' done, you'll agree, quite alone —
 They all have the stamp of back-alley lust
 Which you stand as you can, for stand it you must
 If you'd read him at all. I've no wish to cloud over
 The fame of a book which, from cover to cover,
 Shows the trace of Minerva's most helpful collusion.
 The hall-marks of genius are here in profusion.
 People swarm through its pages like ants in a hill,
 No one's like the others, a personal will
 Makes each man what he is and his life what it was.
 The modern Balzac? Not at all — the new 'Bozi'

Where the Frenchman employed an urbane moderation,
 The Englishman gloried in exaggeration.
 But, in spite of his gargoyles, his fine gift of humour
 Kept even his quaintness from the taint of ill-humour.
 In a grin of delight, he played tricks with his drawing,
 And no matter how far from the real he was yawing
 His object were merely a louder guffawing.
 He never believed his grotesques were true pictures
 Of life, he knew perfectly well men are mixtures
 Of rather more this or a little less that;
 No man is pure angel and none is sheer brat.
 Where he painted them so, it was done to enhance
 Some meaning he wished to make clear: circumstance
 Induced him to stress both the gall and the honey,
 And no one knew better just when to be funny.
 Mr. Masters, quite otherwise, thinks his creations
 Reveal abstract truth in their vilest relations.
 He sees every one as the suffering prey
 Of some low, hidden instinct, his business to flay
 The decency off them and show them all naked,
 A few of them zanies, the rest downright wicked.
 In all his vast gallery there's but one exception,
 And that, I hold, is to have wrought with deception.
 If some excellent sense of the really amusing
 Had led him to practise a little more fusing
 Of the good and the bad, his book had succeeded
 In being the great masterpiece we have needed
 Ever since the beginning. As it is, his caprice
 Has given us only a great Masters' piece.

How Minerva deserted him all through
 the sequel,
 We can easily see if we hunt for an equal
 Success in the list of his subsequent works.
 Each hitches along in a series of jerks.
 He tries lyrics, and ballads, and novels
 in verse,
 But lacks always the wit to return to the
 terse.
 In the last, 'Domesday Book,' he relied
 upon Browning
 To replace Minerva and keep him from
 drowning.
 Shallow hope! He achieved a self-hitting
 satire,
 Mr. Masters looked so odd in Browning's
 attire.
 The huge bulk of his book brought to
 mind the old fable
 Of the bull-frog who, seeing an ox in
 the stable,
 Puffed up till he burst in a vain-glorious
 trying
 To attain the same size. But no magni-
 fying
 Can make of unripeness a thing brought
 to a finish,
 For blowing it up only makes it look
 thinnish.
 If asked my opinion, I think that Minerva
 Was cruel to abandon the rôle of pre-
 server.
 To lift a man suddenly out of obscurity
 And leave him quite solus in his pre-
 maturity
 Was not, I think, cricket. (I like to
 imply an
 Acquaintance with idioms as remote as
 the Chian,
 They read like a dash of the pepper called
 Cayenne.)
 To conclude, I believe, when the Gods
 have done chaffing,
 Minerva will one morning catch herself
 laughing,
 And, as laughing's a good-natured act to
 fall into,
 I should not be surprised if she found
 she had been too
 High-handed and harsh in her speedy
 desertion
 Of an author who might have become
 her diversion
 Had her relatives not been so prompt
 with their jeers.

Then, totalling up the count of the years
 And the works she'd permitted her erst-
 while protégé
 To publish without her assistance, 'Hey-
 day!'
 I can hear her exclaiming, "This will
 scarcely redound
 To my credit, and since the world knows
 that I found
 Him and helped him, I really think it
 would be better
 If I helped him again to become the
 begetter
 Of another 'Spoon River,' or at least
 some quite fine thing
 Which folk will acknowledge to be a
 divine thing.'
 I should not be astonished if, touched to
 the marrow,
 Minerva set out in her largest *Pierre*
Arrow,
 Or else (since I would not pretend to a
 choice)
 Departed in her most expensive Rolls-
Royce,
 With a dozen or two extremely sharp
 axes,
 Three or four different saws, and various
 waxes,
 A hammer and nails, also scissors and
 strings,
 The whole bundle of tools which a good
 workman brings
 To a job who's no wish to go back for
 his 'things.'
 Arriving *chez* Masters, there'll be a short
 parley,
 And I conjure the world not to miss the
 finale."

At this point in my tale, there suddenly
 grew
 On my ear a low sound like wind sweep-
 ing through
 Many acres of pine-trees; but, even as I
 listened,
 It changed into bird-calls which merrily
 glistened
 Like sun-spattered feathers of tone
 through the glancing
 Of leaves over water where shadows are
 dancing.
 Once again was a change, and I heard
 the low roar
 Of surf beating up against a rock shore;

This gave place to the clanging of bells
 over valleys
 And the long monotone of horns blown
 from Swiss chalets.
 I'd scarcely determined that fact when
 again
 It transmuted itself into pattering rain,
 Which fused in its turn to harsh drums
 and to blares
 Of tin trumpets, the kind that you meet
 with at fairs.
 But before I'd accustomed myself to the
 noise,
 It rose quiet, single, enduring in poise,
 Held high to a balance above growling
 thunder
 As though I were harkening to the world's
 wonder,
 The organ at Harlem, while the "Mourn-
 ing of Rachel"
 Was played — and I knew I was listening
 to Vachel.
 "Who else has, or ever has had, such a
 voice
 As is his, Vachel Lindsay's? Whether his
 choice,
 Be it singing, exhorting, making fun,
 prophesying,
 It is equally lovely and soul-satisfying.
 He's a composite choir, whether shouting
 or chanting,
 Whoever's heard once must admit to a
 haunting
 Nostalgia to hear him again. It's en-
 chanting.
 A Sunday-school orator, plus inspira-
 tion,
 The first ballad-singer, bar none, of the
 Nation.
 When he is performing, I acknowledge
 to being
 More delighted with hearing than I am
 with seeing.
 Perhaps I'm self-conscious, but his pos-
 tures and poses
 Do not strike me as happily chosen for
 Moses
 Bearing down from the mountain his
 Tables of Stone.
 Otherwise the part fits him as though
 'twere his own.
 When he starts in proclaiming his credo
 of new laws,
 They appear to be vadeville stunts
 dashed with blue laws.

He's so desperately earnest there's no
 modifying him,
 And that wonderful voice is forever en-
 skying him.
 There's a sober old owl and a bright
 dragon-fly in him,
 But clearly there's nothing at all of the
 diy in him.
 An odd, antic fellow, but if you insist
 On the unvarnished truth, a sublime
 egotist
 Delighting to cover his titles and fly leaves
 With the personal notes his omnipresent
 'I' leaves.
 This trait should endear him to every
 collector
 Long after his ego's become a mere
 spectre.
 If his writing's so *chic* that you can't
 read a particle,
 Why, all the more grist for a bibliophile's
 article.
 He's a sort of mad xylophone, twinkling
 his bells
 Before all the doors of the thirty-six Hells.
 No whirligig dervish gyrating his piety
 Can ever be less moved than he with
 anxiety
 Lest his furious rhythms may show im-
 propriety
 And injure his creed in the eyes of
 society.
 He knows his own heart and its innate
 sobriety
 And cares nothing for fools who may
 note with dubiety
 A worship which ranges through so much
 variety.
 A mighty jazz dancer before the Lord! —
 I can think of no happier term to record
 His effect when reciting. He's astound-
 ingly mystic
 Even when he purports to be most natu-
 ralistic,
 A queer ancient trait we may call
 Judastic,
 Engraff on a style which is pure Method-
 istic.
 He is always attempting to fathom his
 soul,
 But he cannot get hold of a long enough
 pole.
 As he uses an ancient one which he in-
 herited,
 Perhaps, after all, his failure is merited.

It's a battered old thing might be John
 Wesley's staff,
 Good enough in its day, but too short by
 half
 To reach to his bottom. Still there's
 something so stable
 In his love for the heirloom, it might
 pass for a label.
 The fellow has scarce an iota of logic
 Though he leans rather strongly toward
 the pedagogic.
 These two traits make his teaching less
 vivid than taking.
 He appears as the herald of some proud
 awaking,
 But what it's to be, I dare swear he's no
 whit
 More enlightened than we are, not one
 little bit.
 I like his conceit of the amaranth apples,
 (The word is so charming, the look of it
 dapples
 His page with sunshine) and his modern
 Valkyri,
 A cross between Joan of Arc and a
 fairy —
 I, too, should have relished some good
 latakia
 At a table for two behind clumps of
 spirea
 At the top of his Truth Tower cafeteria
 With this twenty-first century wise young
 Medea.
 Who wouldn't, indeed! But the sweep-
 ings and shavings
 I gather up after her talk seem mere
 ravings,
 The opaline fancies of moonlight and
 youth.
 Among them I scarcely can plot out one
 truth
 Plain enough to be platformed by some
 voting sleuth
 And paraded before the precinct polling-
 booth.
 What's the difference, say I, since the
 book is as airy
 As the dew-dripping song of a young wild
 canary.
 Who dotes on perusing economists'
 tracts?
 There are millions of volumes which deal
 with mere facts.
 I prefer this speeded basket of rose and
 camelia,

And a populace dancing a gay seguidilla
 Under Tajes Mahal, with the star-chimes
 all ringing.
 (That term, by the way, simply does its
 own singing.)
 'Amaranth apple-trees, sandal-wood thick-
 ets!'
 Bless the man who has shown us the way
 through the wickets
 Which lead to this pleasance, and haply
 the leaven
 Works none the less well because he calls
 it Heaven.
 The book is the whole of him, minus his
 rhythm.
 But the others — how often I pass a day
 with them,
 Boomlaying and shouting, 'creeping
 through the black,'
 With a whole troop of nigger-gods yell-
 ing at my back,
 And the motors whizzing with their
 'crack-crack-crack,'
 Till at last I strike the wheat-ridge track
 And up along a mulberry lane
 I listen to the song of the Rachel-Jane.
 And as I listen, perhaps it is absurd,
 The singer changes to a small grey bird,
 And then I see the purple quiver
 Of a rainbow junk on a silver river.
 I know that 'Spring comes on forever.'
 I know it by heart, I have heard the tale
 From Lindsay's jade-grey nightingale,
 I shall never forget it, because I know it
 By heart. This tribute? Do I not owe
 it!
 Forgive me then, most fanciful poet,
 If I find in you rarest, gravest delight
 When you would have brought me to
 Heaven's height.
 I am very well off where I am, I think,
 Still you certainly write with a golden ink,
 But I wish you would give us more of
 the Chink."

At which juncture, I paused to see if my
 friend,
 Who had not said a word, might have
 ceased to attend.
 Far from it, his eyes were fixed on my
 face
 With an eager insistence as if he would
 trace
 My meaning beyond the mere words.
 "What you say,"

He broke silence at last in his impassive way,
 "Proves your poets to be certainly not of my day.
 You put the fact gently, but we are *parse*.
 At least that I presume's what you wish to convey."
 With a horrified gesture I started to say —
 But what? 'Thank the Lord I had no time to get in
 The something I should have wrapt up my regret in,
 Like a pill in a sugar-plum, since he went on:
 "I should not be surprised, as your judgment anon,
 If I heard you correctly, was for Miss Dickinson,
 With Whitman and Poe. To throw off constraint,
 I will say I consider your pronouncement quaint.
 But I'm not so at sea to account for the cause
 As before your narration I certainly was.
 For the men, I'll admit there is room for dispute;
 But the choice of Miss Dickinson I must refute."
 Then seeing me shrug, he observed, "I am human,
 And hardly can bear to allow that a woman
 Is ever quite equal to man in the arts;
 The two sexes cannot be ranked counter-parts."
 "My dear Sir," I exclaimed, "if you'd not been afraid
 Of Margaret Fuller's success, you'd have stayed
 Your hand in her case and more justly have rated her."
 Here he murmured morosely, "My God, how I hated her!
 But have you no women whom you must hate too?
 I shall think all the better of you if you do,
 And of them, I may add." I assured him,
 "A few.
 But I scarcely think man feels the same contradictory

Desire to love them and shear them of victory?"
 "You think wrong, my young friend," he declared with a frown,
 "Man will always love woman and always pull down
 What she does." "Well, of course, if you will *lung* the cynical,
 It is quite your affair, but there is the pinnacle
 She's welcome to climb with man if she wishes."
 "And fall with a crash like a trayful of dishes,"
 He answered at once, "but if there's no gainsaying her,
 There's certainly not the least use in de-laying her."
 "Very well," I assured him, and quite without mockery.
 "But I know several women not yet broken crockery.
 Amy Lowell, for instance," I spoke a bit clamorily.
 "Good Heavens!" he shouted, "not one of the family!
 I remember they used to be counted by dozens,
 But I never was interested in immature cousins."
 "They grow, I believe." The retort was so pat
 There was nothing to say, and he pulled down his hat.
 I continued: "But since this is not genealogy,
 You'll permit me to waive any sort of analogy
 Between her and your friend. No one likes to be bound
 In a sort of perpetual family pound
 Tied by *esprit de corps* to the wheels of the dead.
 A poet above all people must have his head.
 Indeed it's been whispered the lady sees red
 When the subject is broached, she will find her own latitude."
 "My friend, were he here, would extol such an attitude,"
 He said very gravely. "But proceed, Sir, I pray."
 I hastened as fast as I could to obey:
 "Conceive, if you can, an electrical storm

Of a swiftness and fury surpassing the
norm;
Conceive that this cyclone has caught up
the rainbow
And dashed dizzily on with it streaming
in tow.
Imagine a sky all split open and scis-
sored
By lightnings, and then you can picture
this blizzard.
That is, if you'll also imagine the clashes
Of tropical thunder, the incessant
crashes
Which shiver the hearing and leave it in
ashes.
Remember, meanwhile, that the sky is
prismatic
And outrageous with colour. The effect
is erratic
And jarring to some, but to others
ecstatic,
Depending, of course, on the idiosyncratic
Response of beholders. When you come
to think of it,
A good deal is demanded by those on
the brink of it.
To be caught in the skirts of a whirling
afflatus
One must not suppose is experienced
gratis.
Broncho-busting with rainbows is scarcely
a game
For middle-aged persons inclined to the
tame.
Likewise, who'd enjoy a sunrise from the
Matter-
horn — something all travellers agree is
the attar
Of distilled perfection — must be ready
to reap
The mid-afternoon pangs of too little
sleep.
I might go on forever commingling my
metaphors,
And verse by this means does undoubt-
edly get a force,
But persons who so air their fancy are
bored,
A thing every bone in my body abhors,
And you'll guess by this time, without
farther allusion,
That the lady's unique and surprising pro-
fusion
Creates in some minds an unhappy con-
fusion.

No one's to be blamed who's not some-
thing and twenty,
But it's lucky for her that young folks are
so plenty.
The future's her goose and I dare say
she'll wing it,
Though the triumph will need her own
power to sing it.
Although I'm no prophet, I'll hazard a
guess
She'll be rated by time as more rather
than less.
Once accustom yourself to her strange
elocation,
And milder verse seems by contrast mere
dilution.
Then again (for I've kept back a very
great part),
Despite her traducers, there's always a
heart
Hid away in her poems for the seeking;
impassioned,
Beneath silver surfaces cunningly fash-
ioned
To baffle coarse prying, it waits for the
touch
Of a man who takes surfaces only as such.
Her work's not, if you will, for the glib
amateur,
But I wonder, would it be improved if it
were?
Must subtlety always be counted a flaw
And poetry not poetry which puzzles the
raw?
Let me turn for an instant to note the
reverse
Of my poet, who employs many manners
of verse
And when not hurricaning's astoundingly
terse;
Yet here the poor creature but makes
matters worse.
There are plenty of critics who say they
can't hear
When she sings *sotto voce*, the sensa-
tion's queer
And inspires a species of horrible fear.
To be told there's a sound and catch
nothing at all,
Is a circumstance fairly designed to appal
Most casual people, for here is the hitch:
The admission that one's own ears can't
grasp a pitch
Clear and lovely to others. Whereupon a
bow-wow

Which swells to a perfectly hideous row.
 They've accused her of every description
 of quackery,
 Of only concerning herself with knick-
 knackery,
 It has all been enough to set any one's
 back awry.
 She's a fool to resent it, a man would
 have grinned?
 Quite so, but then poets are created thin-
 skinned,
 And when *one* is more than a little
 volcanic,
 With a very strong dash of the ultra-
 tyrannic,
 The retort contentious will be simply
 Titanic.
 Behold, then, our poet, by the lash of
atrociousness
 Coaxed into an attitude much like
 ferociousness.
 Every book that she writes has a preface
 to guard it
 Which spits fire and cannon-balls, mak-
 ing each hard hit
 Tell, and mow down its swathe of ob-
 jectors.
 But critics have ever been good resur-
 rectors.
 Since she keeps the fight going, they rise
 to do battle,
 When the whole mess is only so much
 tittle-tattle.
 So it goes back and forth with the cries
 and the cheering,
 And there's no sign at all of the atmos-
 phere clearing.
 Her books follow each other despite all
 the riot,
 For, oddly enough, there's a queer,
 crumpled quiet
 Perpetually round her, a crazy-quilt tent
 Dividing her happily from the event.
 Armed to the teeth like an old Samurai,
 Juggling with jewels like the ancient
 genii,
 Hung all over with mouse-traps of metres,
 and cages
 Of bright-plumaged rhythms, with pages
 and pages
 Of colours slit up into streaming confetti
 Which give the appearance of something
 sunsetty,
 And gorgeous, and flowing — a curious
 sight

She makes in her progress, a modern
 White Knight,
 Forever explaining her latest inventions
 And assuring herself of all wandering at-
 tentions
 By pausing at times to sing, in a duly
 Appreciative manner, an aria from Tully.
 The horse which she rides will suit any
 part
 Either Peg (with the 'asus,') or 'Peg o'
 my heart.'
 To avoid making blunders, he's usually
 known
 Without any suffix as 'Peg' all alone.
 This style of address has become a tradi-
 tion
 Most offensively silly, since no erudition
 Unaided can ever produce a magician.
 For the magic she has, I see nothing
 demonic
 In the use of free verse (the 'free' is quite
 comic!)
 Or even that mule of the arts, polyphonic.
 No matter what pedants may find that's
 awry in him,
 There's plenty of kick and plenty of fly
 in him.
 Taking this thing and that, and con-
 sidering on it,
 I believe there are more guesses under
 her bonnet
 Than in any two hats you are likely to
 meet
 (Straw or felt, take your choice, so the
 shape be discreet,
 Not too flap-brimmed and weird, nor too
 jaunty and neat)
 In any particular city or street
 You may happen to pick. Note, I only
 say questions,
 Which leaves the mind open to many
 suggestions,
 Up or down, there's the rub. (The mere
 matter of hats
 Is too nice, by the way, to be dealt with
 as 'Rats!'
 There's a temperature here which the
 best thermostats
 Could not regulate better. We're all
 diplomats,
 Now the 'Arrys have ousted the aris-
 tocrats.)"

I looked at my friend, his face was
 averted.

"You make it quite clear why we are
 deserted,
 Old men are tough customers. Now, as a
 foil,
 Give me something as smooth and slow-
 running as oil,
 Something clear, uncontentious, it even
 may be
 A bit chilly in beauty perhaps." "There's
 'H. D.,'"
 I was tempted to shout, she fitted so
 rightly
 His immediate preference: frost falling
 lightly
 In delicate patterns on thin blades of
 grass.
 (Since oil does not fit, I let that figure
 pass,
 Though it did well enough up above
 where it was.)
 "This author's become a species of
 fable
 For she masks her identity under a label.
 If others have ancestors, she would for-
 get hers
 And appear the spontaneous child of two
 letters,
 The printing of which is the ban of type-
 setters.
 They have called her a dryad just stepped
 from a bosc,
 But I see an ice maiden within an ice
 kiosk,
 With icicle stalactites hanging around
 her,
 And the violets frozen with which they
 have crowned her—
 The man who would filch them would be
 an icebounder,
 Which I surely am not. If each lovely,
 veined petal
 Becomes by the contact a trifle too brittle
 And cold to give out its usual warm scent,
 They make it up amply by such dazzle-
 ment
 Of sun-shot-through-ice that the shine of
 her shrine
 Seems the sky-piercing glitter of some
 Apennine.
 I have told you before that my mind
 teems with similes.
 It's a shocking bad habit persists in some
 families.
 I've an uncle—but there, I spread out
 like a runnel,

When I should flow as straight as though
 poured through a funnel.
 So take this digression in the light of an
 interlude
 Leading up to a change which I wish to
 obtrude
 On the form of my speech, for I find I
 am freezing
 Before the remarkably chilly, though
 pleasing,
 Ice image I've painted, and soon shall be
 sneezing.
 My Muse must immediately seek out a
 clime
 Where her trippings and flittings are not
 above rime,
 Or dew that is duly congealed, or hoar-
 frost.
 I'm indifferent to science, so the mean-
 ing be tossed
 Into some sort of shape which fits well
 with my pattern,
 For, whatever the faults of said Muse,
 she's no slattern.
 My verse, I'll allow, is the species fan-
 tastic,
 I've been *épris* for years of the style
 Hudibrastic,
 But my rhyming morale is, I trust, in-
 elastic.
 Which preamble means I have searched
 for a week
 To rouse neither my Muse's nor heroine's
 pique
 In the matter of climate. I've found it
 in Greek.
 'H. D.' (for it's time we got back to the
 girl)
 Might be some ancient mirror, with
 mother-of-pearl
 Let into its metal, a thing which a nation
 Deems well worth the cost of its own
 exhumation,
 A prize to count up to the whole excava-
 tion,
 'This mirror, which carries the breath of
 the past
 On its scarcely stained surface, is no
 scholiast,
 But a living replica of what once was
 living
 At the touch of a rare adoration reviv-
 ing.
 Here youths in scant armour, on the way
 to the galleys,

Woo maidens in dark ilex-groves; in the
 valleys,
 Aucumone-sprinkled, young shepherds
 guard flocks
 Clad in ram's fleeces only; above the
 sharp rocks
 Jutting into the purple Ionian sea
 Are the white, fluted columns of —
 Fiddle-de-dee!
 Such lyrical bursts in a mere *jeu d'esprit*
 Are like brandy poured into a cup of
 bohea,
 A transaction called 'lacing' in old days,
on dit.
 I can't say for myself, being no devotee
 Of either diluted or straight *eau-de-vie*,
 And the eighteenth amendment is
 nothing to me.
 Still, I don't like a law couched in
 hyperbole,
 It gets any one's goat. To return to
 'H. D.,'
 Whom I've really kept waiting most out-
 rageously,
 She's the thing as it was, not the thing
 we have made it
 And with insolent ornament quite over-
 laid it.
 She descends to no commonplace, flock-
 guarding shepherds.
 No pompous Victorian gush ever jeopard's
 Her reticent, finely-drawn line. No Greek
 marble
 Has less of the puerile and less of the
 garble.
 Her sea is the sea of a child or a Neriad,
 And yet no false word lifts it out of its
 period.
 Her flowers of shore and of cliff those we
 seek
 On our cliffs and our shores, but hers
 somehow are Greek.
 Her poems are excitement and rest, and
 the glory
 Of living a life and not reading a story.
 Archaeology? Yes, in the very same
 way
 That geology's the mountain we climb
 every day.
 The armour she welds, the dyed cloth she
 weaves,
 Are so perfect in artistry, every word
 cleaves
 To the substance as though that would
 crackle without it

And split. Read her books (there are
 two) if you doubt it.
 Perhaps, after all, this quintessence of
 Greece
 Is the wool on a century-garlanded fleece;
 Underneath is, and was, a tough fibre of
 leather.
 Is the Greece she has given us Greece
 altogether?
 As well might one ask if the youth of
 Praxiteles
 Is an everyday chap or a scheme to be-
 little ease
 By exalting the sharp line of young
 masculinity.
 In her method and his is there not some
 affinity?
 Each sheers to the soul, to the base of a
 nemesis,
 And the hard, glancing residue is the
 ultimate genesis.
 For out of the past is the future; a truism,
 You must pardon, since man has in-
 vented no new 'ism'
 Since the days of the cavemen. I wish
 merely to prove
 That this most modern poet runs along
 an old groove,
 That the erudite novelties filling her
 pages
 Are as old as this morning and as new as
 the ages."

Here a voice interrupted my long perora-
 tion,
 Speaking, I detected, in some irritation.
 "I think," it announced, "though I may
 be mistaken,
 There's a poet whom you've not men-
 tioned yet, Conrad Aiken."
 Such an ill-governed mind as I've got,
 and the porter
 Never keeps out intruders who call, as
 he ought to.
 (That rhyme will be cursed as "a regular
 snorter"
 By every stand-pat, Tennysonian sup-
 porter.
 I am sorry myself to be forced to distort
 a
 Fine line unduly, and if I or my thought
 err
 I am willing to own it without the least
hauteur.
 I rhyme as I can, and am never a courter

For all suffrages.) The doorman, I said,
 Who, between you and me, is a crass
 dunderhead,
Had let this extremely irascible gentle-
man
 Pass through the door, and of course he
 began
 At once to upbraid me. It's the method
 he uses
 To force himself into the sight of the
 Muses.
 "Young man," I replied with some heat,
 "you mistake
 My preoccupation. If you wish to make
 Your entrance at once with the ladies, I'll
 see to it,
 But I should have supposed you'd im-
 mediately veto it."
 This was rather a staggerer, to be grouped
 with the women
 Would tax the endurance of any male
 human;
 Yet to wait any longer, when I might be
 weary
 Before his turn came, did not strike him
 as cheery.
 He puffed and he fumed, with pride pull-
 ing both ways;
 It was pitiable to see the poor fellow's
 malaise.
 But finally, with a great bluffing of
 chivalry,
 He declared he had no sort of feeling of
 rivalry
 Against the fair sex who adorned his pro-
 fession.
 A very neat way, this, to blur a confes-
 sion,
 For the long and the short of it was he'd
 go on
 The carpet at once, if I pleased. There-
 upon
 I hastily made my excuses to one
 Or two ladies I'd meant to have been
 next presented.
 Being sensible persons, they seemed quite
 contented.
 Perhaps 'twas as well, for I'd rather a
 huuch
 The irascible poet might make good with
 his "Punch"
 And land me that terrible "one on the
 jaw,"
 When I'm sure I should "measure my
 length" in the straw.

It will clearly be seen that my anxious
 perusal
 Of a recent combat has done much to
 bamboozle
 The erstwhile classic grace of my natural
 diction.
 You see I obeyed a strong predilection
 In Carpentier's favour to the tune of a
 tenner
 And, with other good sportsmen, I found
 my Gehenna.
 "Mr. Aiken's a poet so cram full of
 knowledge
 He knows all about poetry that's taught
 in a college.
 His versification's as neat as a pin,
 His metre so fine it becomes finikin.
 I say nothing of rhythm, for he's some-
 thing fanatical
 Anent the advantage of the beat mathe-
 matical.
 Within his set limits, the pulse of his
 verse
 Is often most subtle, and even his worse
 Attempts are by no means either jejune
 or lacking
 In form, one can hardly imagine him
 slacking
 In pains or desire. He's all that a poet
 Can make of himself when he sets out
 to do it
 With his heart, and his soul, and his
 strength, and his mind.
 For years now, he's had a most horrible
 grind
 With his work, with the public, but what
 stands in his way
 Is the awkward necessity of something to
 say.
 A man of sensations, of difficult cheerful-
 ness
 Which the fog in his brain has tor-
 mented to fearfulness,
 Possessed of much music and little
 idea,
 Always steeping his soul in the strange
 undersphere
 Of the brain. Since all thought in him
 tends to grow hazy
 When his sentiment's roused, he is lost
 in a mazy
 Vortex where he swings like some pale
 asteroid.
 Seeking orientation, he's stumbled on
 Freud.

With the Austrian's assistance, he's become neurological,
 A terrible fate to befall the illogical.
Being born with an ultra-sensitive cuticle,
 We must realize his verse in a sense therapeutical.
 If he doesn't quite state any fact, his oblique
 Side-glances at subjects are just hide-and-seek
 He's playing with all his frustrated ambitions
 And gaining, thereby, some vicarious frictions.
 He's so young as to think that he proves his maturity
 By boldly colliding with all sorts of impurity.
 His ladies are, most of them, a little bit dusty,
 But we're learning to think any other kind musty.
 The true modern artist would face destitution
 Were it not for that universe-wide institution
 Plain people frown down on and call prostitution.
 No matter how shopworn the plots he has made,
 They will always pass muster if he mentions a spade.
 At least this is true with that type of Bohemia
 Which is not yet aware that such art spells anaemia.
 Not so Aiken — his brothels, street-walkers, dope-eaters
 Are merely the web he weaves over with metres.
 He uses them chiefly because they are easy
 And sure to produce an effect on the queasy.
 For more than all else he dreads falling flat;
 The fear of it teases his brain like a gnat.
 He would rather be called wicked, incomprehensible,
 Anything, so long as the world's not insensible.
 In his anxious desire to escape being tepid,
 He makes too great a show of the over-intrepid,

But his real interest lies in quite other directions:
 In noting the faintest of fleeting reflections
 In tone or in colour; in catching the magic
 Of words against words; and it simply is tragic
 How few apprehend his remarkable quality.
 But was ever a public more lost in frivolity
 Than ours? It cannot tell feathers from lead
 Till you hit it a crack with the last on the head.
 His volumes are filled with a sea-green miasma
 Shot and sprinkled throughout with the grotesque phantasma
 Of an egoist's brain, or a man's when he's sleepy.
 They revolve unrelated and sink into crepey
 Sight and sound mutterings, yet sometimes so vivid
 They are that they seem to stand out in a livid
 And flaming protrusion. Take, for instance, the scene
 Of his satyrs and maenads, which is white striped on green,
 With red, sudden explosions. Sometimes, more surprising,
 The fog lifts a moment before a sun rising
 As clear and as thin as though painted on china
 By some eighteenth century Dresden designer.
 His sordid back rooms disappear and the groans
 Of dying dope-fiends, and we hear 'three clear tones,'
 The tones of his bird in the china-berry tree.
 What a mercy that such a tree happened to be!
 Otherwise, I believe, he must have invented it.
 Never mind, here it is, and he's simply cemented it
 On the botany of poetry for ever and every.
 I say that superbly, without the least quiver.

If the rest of his work's neither Saint
 Paul's nor Kremlin,
 He's built a basilica surely in 'Senlin.'
 At least in that 'Morning Song,' which,
 until lately,
 Was the sole, single fragment he'd done
 adequately.
 'Till 'Punch,' ah! with 'Punch' now, he
 should achieve fame,
 But there's nothing so dogging as a once-
 come-by name.
 If this were his first, he'd be up like a
 rocket,
 Now I think he'll burn steadily on in his
 socket
 Making beautiful poems though the
 public won't stand 'em
 Because he can't drive style and tale in a
 tandem.
 Since the books as they are stick so hard
 in the gizzard,
 The sensible thing is to have each one
 scissored.
 Cut out from each volume the one or
 two scraps
 You might like on a third or fourth read-
 ing perhaps;
 Paste them into a scrap-book, and some
 rainy day
 Just glance over the lot and I think you
 will say:
 'By Jove! What a fellow he is in his
 way!'
 And I'll thank you for that as a true leaf
 of bay.
 If he, the arch-sceptic, finds other folk
 doubting,
 He makes a mistake to be seen always
 pouting.
 He has not his deserts, yet to publish the
 fact
 Is a childish and most unintelligent act,
 But every one knows he's deficient in
 tact.
 A man who can work with such utter
 devotion
 Can afford to wait patiently for his pro-
 motion,
 And that it will come, I've a very strong
 notion.
 One thing we can say, he will certainly
 wait
 And either get in or turn dust at the gate.
 Since Fame is a very good hand at the
 shears,

I shall not be surprised if he gets his
 arrears,
 For quality counts in the long run of
 years."
 I turned to the shade in my mind, but
 unused
 To listening with patience, the thing had
 vamoosed.

Not so my old friend, he was listening
 intensely,
 And as I stopped speaking, he said, "I'm
 immensely
 Intrigued by that man, he's a curious
 fellow.
 Too bad he's permitted himself to see
 yellow.
 A jaundiced perspective's a great handi-
 cap.
 Well, what other poets have you got in
 your lap?
 I commend you, young man, as an excel-
 lent etcher."
 "The next I shall notice will be John
 Gould Fletcher,"
 I answered, "but before I begin my nar-
 ration
 Don't think; if you can, see an irradia-
 tion
 Spreading out over roofs, over trees, over
 sky,
 The gold screen of a moment, on which
 you descry
 Such oddments as heaps of 'vermilion
 pavilions'
 And Gabriel's angels all riding on pil-
 lions
 On the backs of cloud horses, blowing
 trumpets of thunder,
 Above forests of elephant trees standing
 under
 The precipitous cone of some steep after-
 noon.
 The whirling wind 'screams,' the stars
 'shrill,' the streets 'croon.'
 A cataract of music swirls out of the
 throats
 Of the long scarlet trumpets, the pris-
 matic notes
 Sweep over the city like sun-spray and
 laughter,
 Embroidered with all colours . . . Then
 what comes after?
 More colours, a rain of them, hanging,
 delaying,

To sprinkle cool 'jade balustrades' with
 their staying.
 Golden flakes, silver filaments, what
 pandemonium!
 The rainbow joined in wedlock to a burst-
 ing harmonium.
 Elephantine surrenders, prodigious re-
 lapses,
 Speech turned to a fire-ball which soars
 and collapses
 And spills down its words like the whole
 spectrum falling
 In a broken excitement. My eye, it's ap-
 palling!
 Such a chaotic shooting and drifting of
 particles,
 Mere loveliness solus, not stuck tight to
 articles,
 For what it all means does not matter a
 jot;
 You are filled with delight at it, or you
 are not.
 But suppose that you weary of the poly-
 chromatic—
 Some natures, I realize, are far too
 lymphatic
 To derive any pleasure from what is not
 static—
 There are corners to rest in with foun-
 tains, and grass
 Streaming up in long slopes, and if you
 should pass
 Just over the hill, there's a house where
 each column
 Is wreathed and entangled with the half-
 gay, half-solemn
 Recollections of childhood. There you
 can eat luncheon,
 And drink slow well-water from some old
 grey puncheon,
 And listen to tale of hobgoblins and
 genie
 Till I venture to say you'll be a bit
 spleeny
 And welcome the rising of white-faced
 Selene.
 (Rather pretty, that last, such touches do
 garnish
 One's writing, I think, and I'm not above
 varnish.
 I like a bright lustre in poems or medal-
 lions,
 The polish one sees in the later Italians.
 Here a friend who's dropped in says I've
 mixed my mythology.

Such a slip, if I've made it, deserves an
 apology:
 Selene, Cybele, Diana—I care
 Not at all for mere names. You may take
 Lemprière
 And choose any Goddess you think op-
 portune
 So you quite understand I refer to the
 moon.)
 As you sit in the moonlight, the gist of
 your summary
 Will be: Here at last, is a poet without
 flummery.
 A score or two words are his total of
 plunder,
 But the whole is a boyhood imprisoned in
 wonder.
 A boy, and the things all about him—
 plain stuff,
 And not even new, but the measure's
 enough.
 Not the kind which they want for a
 penny-a-liner;
 It's too sharp, and too sheer, but for
 that all the finer.
 Have you ever gone into a dim, disused
 attic
 And poked about there among the
 erratic
 Remains of worn toys, legless soldiers,
 chipped blocks,
 And suddenly come on an old music-
 box?
 As you twist round the handle, the notes
 seem to squeeze
 Through the dust, some are lost and the
 rest choke and wheeze,
 But you make out a tune, and the mere
 broken hint of it
 Is the agonized joy of remembrance, by
 dint of it
 You suffer and love with an ache you'd
 forgotten.
 It were wiser, perhaps, were your ears
 stuffed with cotton.
 So Fletcher's not only the rainbow in
 spate,
 He's the soul of a music-box which can
 create
 All our childhood again. If the tune's a
 bit scrappy,
 What's the odds, just so long as the
 sound makes us happy?
 So far, Mr. Fletcher, for that's only a
 mood,

We'll not whistle until we are out of the wood.
 Were your publishers mad, or why bind together
 Your 'Old House' and 'Symphonies'? One wonders whether
 You were bent on emptying out your portfolio.
 You created, at any rate, quite an imbroglio.
 This break-up of feeling with one or two vile backs
 Of discord is as jarring as gumdrops and smilax
 Giving suddenly place to red-peppers and asters.
 The symphonies, come on this way, call for plasters.
 This arrangement, indeed, was the worst of disasters.
 Up bright in the morning, shoes tied and hair brushed,
 On a Sunday, maybe, when you're not too much rushed,
 You can seek ancient China in Symphony Blue;
 Or, if you prefer, you may take a stroll through
 Any Spring, in the Green; you may sail over oceans
 With the Red glare of stoke-holes to thrill your emotions;
 You may fight in the Scarlet, and laugh in the Yellow,
 You may do what you please in the Gold.
 A fine fellow
 Whose palette is full if a little bit messy.
 But you have a good deal of the world here in esse.
 At least, you would have, were it not for a doubt
 About what any symphony's really about.
 He writes, it appears, in a prismatic spasm;
 This phase of his work is complete protoplasm.
 He is whirling his atoms before quite cohering them,
 But there's no doubt at all that he soon will be steering them.
 Yet, hold on a bit, my dear chap, do you think
 You can set all America down in cold ink?
 Here you are, aeroplaning from Boston to Texas,

And taking snapshots as you fly to perplex us.
 If you see a sky-scraper, down it goes, and the next
 Shot's a square of Chicago — fit it into the text.
 Joggle niggers and Mexicans, some of them dead 'uns,
 And for spirit, bring in a few battles where reddens
 The smoke of prond guns, for your richest of gravies
 Is the sauce of Bull Run and the bier of Jeff Davis.
 You've done it, my cock, as well as a man
 Who is chiefly the slave of his sensations can;
 For somehow your genius has a habit of shying
 Whenever your heart is involved. It's most trying.
 You can work yourself up to a towering passion
 Over landscapes and peoples, but when you would fashion
 A love lyric — Puff! and the substance dissolves
 And melts out of your fingers. A thousand resolves
 To break through with yourself, to have done with objectives,
 Leave you still where you were, exploring perspectives.
 I declare I could weep, did I not know that life
 Is only achieved through a vast deal of strife.
 You stand in the midst of a cosmic heterogeny,
 But I do not despair of your rearing a progeny.
 If chaos at last jelled into a man,
 What a big chaos did, your small chaos can.
 You were built, you perceive, as the first of your clan.
 And, whatever you want, you've got what no other
 Poet ever has had. So a truce to the pother!
 Bless the man, you've done something as new as tomorrow,
 And I cannot consider your case with much sorrow.

Just wait" . . . But, most gently, my old friend interrupted,

"Don't go on, Sir, I beg, I am being corrupted.

Your poets are so diverse. One thing I can say,

Good or bad, they're more various than poets were in my day.

If you've more in your bag, produce them, I pray."

Thus adjured, I remembered the one or two ladies

I'd deserted, and mentally crying "Oh, furies!

Will they be mad as hops or affect a quite staid ease?

Whichever it is, I shall get a good wiggling,

To be kept waiting's always a bit *infra digging*.

I must cudgel my brain for a really apt whopper.

Women don't pardon blunders when their *amour propre*

Is in question." But all of the chickens I'd counted,

When I'd tallied them up to a total, amounted

To just nothing at all, for your modern Egeria

Is far too advanced to give way to hysteria.

Approaching the first, I said no woman like her

Had yet been considered. She replied "Oh, you piker!

A poet learns to see, and you need not dissemble.

We will go up at once. Grace, here is your thimble."

Then jumping up quickly from where she was sitting

She quite overturned a little girl's knitting

Who was there by some chance, I'll come back to that later.

Said I to myself, no man living can hate her,

She is what I should call a born fascinator.

Upon reaching my friend — and let me explain

That these scenes in the scene all take place in my brain —

I began with a few neatly turned words on love

As the poet's own bournue, and declared that no glove

Ever fitted a hand with less wrinkling and snigger

Than this theme this poet. Here I noticed her shrug her

Shoulders a little, which was rather upsetting.

However, it may have been only coquetting.

Still I thought it was wise to get on with my tale:

"Our love-poet, *par excellence*, Sara Teasdale."

I said with a flourish. Now that was a whale

Of a compliment, such things deserve an entail,

'Twas so brilliantly super even if it were true,

And I knew very well 'twas but one of a cue.

"This poet," I went on, "is a great niece of Sapho,

I know not how many 'greats' laid in a row

There should be, but her pedigree's perfectly clear;

You can read it in 'Magazine Verse' for the year.

She is also a cousin, a few times removed,

Of dear Mrs. Browning, that last can be proved.

The elder poet hid in a shrouding mantilla

Which she called Portuguese. Was ever trick sillier?

Our Sara is bolder, and feels quite at ease As herself; in her mind there is nothing to tease.

Dale and valley, the country is hers she traverses,

She has mapped it all out in a bushel of verses.

Sara Teasdale she is — was — for our minnesinger,

Behind her front door, is now Mrs. Filsinger.

A hard question this, for a hand-maid of Muses,

When she's once made a name in cold print which she loses

On taking a husband, the law's masculinity
 Would seem to demand a perpetual virginity
 For all married poets of the down-trodden sex.
 To forfeit the sale of a new volume checks
 Even marital ardour, to say nothing of cheques.
 It's just this sort of thing which so frequently wrecks
 The artistic composure, and must surely perplex
 Any husband who's not in the class of henpecks.
 Still I think the poor man should find some consolation
 In two or three volumes of sheer adoration.
 It's the price he receives for never imposing
 Himself on his wife when the lady's composing.
 Under whatever name, the world grows awarer
 Every year of the prize we have got here in Sara.
 She has no colours, no trumpets, no plat-
 forms, no scepticisms,
 She has no taste for experiments, and
 joins in no schisms;
 She just sings like a bird, and I think
 you'll agree
 This is clearly the place for the china-
 berry tree —
 With a difference, the bird in that pleas-
 ant, arboreal
 Importation had three tones, while her
 repertorial
 Range is compassed in one, the reflex
 amatorial.
 She loves in a charming, perpetual way,
 As though it just came when she was
 distraught,
 Or quite occupied in affairs of the day.
 Or else, and I think the remark's more
 acute,
 She lives as the flower above a deep root.
 Like a dedicate nun, she tells bead after
 bead
 At Matins, Tierce, Vespers. You'd think
 she'd be freed
 Just once in a while to find something to
 say.

Not at all, she's a vast *catalogue raison-
 née*
 Of the subject. No one's so completely
au fait.
 Her poetry succeeds, in spite of fragility,
 Because of her very remarkable agility.
 There is no single stunt in the style
 amatory
 Which is not included in her category,
 We may as well take that at once a
priori.
 So easy to her seems the work of creation
 She might be just jotting down lines
 from dictation.
 There is nothing green here, each poem's
 of the ripest.
 The income tax lists her as Cupid's own
 typist.
 Of course, it is true that she's not intel-
 lectual,
 But those poets who are, are so apt to
 subject you all
 To theories and treatises, the whole gal-
 vanometry
 Of the bardling who thinks verse a sort
 of geometry.
 Now Sara's as easy to read as a slip
 On a piece of banana, and there's no
 need to skip,
 For each poem's so peculiarly like every
 other
 You may as well stay where you are and
 not bother.
 She's that very rare compost, the dainty
 erotic;
 Such a mixture can't fail to produce a
 hypnotic
 Effect on the reader, whose keenest sen-
 sation
 Will consist in a perfect identification
 Of himself with the poet, and her sorrows
 and joys
 Become his, while he swings to the deli-
 cate poise
 Of a primitive passion so nicely refined
 It could not bring a blush to the most
 squeamish mind.
 Though the poems, I may add, are all
 interlined
 For the ready perusal of those not too
 blind.
 For Sara, if singer, is also a woman,
 I know of no creature more thoroughly
 human.
 If woman, she's also a lady who realizes

That a hidden surprise is the best of surprises.
 She seems a white statue awaiting unveiling,
 But raised on a platform behind a stout railing
 Whence she lures and retires, provoking a nearer
 Contact which is promised to be even dearer
 If we find we have courage enough not to fear her."
 I looked at my subject to find she'd departed.
 It's a habit of hers when a party's once started
 To vanish unnoticed. My poetess had flown.
 Seeing which, I remarked that I'd better postpone
 The rest of my discourse. "I think you have shown
 The outlines at least, my young cicerone,"
 Said my friend. "Have you others? I see the sun's setting.
 If you have many more, why we must be getting
 On faster." I promised to use all despatch
 Which I saw was most needed when I took out my watch.

"There's a child here I've not yet had leisure to mention,
 Both she and her mother are worth your attention.
 And one or two more I can think of, but most of them
 Will not take up much time. After that, there's a host of them
 We'll consider, if you are agreeable, en masse."
 "You spoke of a child, a child in this class!"
 He asked me astonished. "I suppose that betrays me
 A fogey indeed, but the thing does amaze me."
 "No wonder," I answered, "America's youth
 Symbolized with a vengeance as plainest of truth.
 The poets I've presented may none of them be
 Among the top boughs of that flourishing tree,

The *Genus Poeticus, Anglice-folia*,
 Whose flowers have rivalled the greater magnolia,
 But no shoot we know of has blossomed so early
 As ours, and that makes a distinction clearly.
 A ten-year-old child, half elf and half sage,
 Where else can you find a poet of her age?
 This is no little girl, though the critics preëempt her
 As the essence of childhood, but, *caveat emptor*;
 It is easy to say, which is all that they care about,
 For where is the critic one can see is aware about
 Any essence whatever. This child's no more childhood
 Than the wolf was the grandmother for donning her mild hood.
 Hilda Conkling (I see I've forgotten to name her)
 Is a greater phenomenon than they would proclaim her.
 She is poetry itself, for her slight little soul
 Is not yet of a size to encompass the whole
 She gives out. Without knowing who really is speaking,
 She speaks, and her words fall without the least seeking.
 There's no need for allowances, the poems that she writes
 May be certainly reckoned among the high lights
 Of their *genre*, and although I'm no hyperbolist
 I say flatly this child is the first Imagist.
 But you will remember that Jove sometimes naps,
 And the baby in Hilda not seldom naps
 The genius. But what of that! Such handicaps
 May be reckoned as *nil* in the total, perhaps.
 If she sometimes descends from Parnassus crescendo
 To play with her dolls, why, the greatest of men do

The same in their fashion, and no in-
mundo
Need follow so natural a way of proceed-
ing.
It is merely the little girl in her stamped-
ing.

Since she's neither a freak, nor a ghoul,
nor a Houghnium,
We may thank the good fate which has
left her a minim

Of usual childhood — but, bless my soul,
what

Has become of her now, she was here,
was she not?"

"Oh," her mother joined in, "she ran
off to catch

A white kitten she saw. There's no fear
of a scratch.

She understands kittens." "Did she hear
what I'm saying?"

I asked. "I am really afraid she was pay-
ing

But little attention, her fingers were
drumming

In time to some sort of a tune she was
humming.

Now she and the kitten are disposed to
agree,

We have lost her, I fear, so you'll have
to take me."

Now what can a gallant gentleman do
On receiving a challenge so couched?

"*Entre nous*,
I think you're delightful," I said in aside,
"Your verses have made many poets
emerald-eyed.

What you seem to do without turning a
hair

Is just the one trick makes the less gifted
swear.

Who would copy you, digs for himself
a fine snare."

But when a man whispers inside of his
mind

He can scarcely expect an onlooker to
find

His abstraction amusing. My friend woke
me smartly

From my silent flirtation by announcing,
quite tartly,

"The child, as you've proved, is a *lusus*
naturae,

A verdict I'm sure any qualified jury

Would agree to at once were her case
up for trial.

Why even our feminophobe on the 'Dial'
Never dared to bring forward young ladies
of ten

As serious rivals to middle-aged men.

Poor Margaret Fuller, how she would
have doted on

Your remarkable age, and how happily
floated on

Its dawn-coloured currents and all its
forensical

Preoccupations! We were so common-
sensual.

Perhaps we were tainted with some senti-
mentalism,

But your *beau ideal* seems to be ele-
mentalism.

I can cap you, however, by mentioning one
Poet who never grew up, your friend,
Miss Dickinson."

"The comparison's just," I declared. "As
to Hilda,

Your juxtaposition need never bewilder
The admirers of either. One you failed

quite to scotch;

The other, I think, you should certainly
watch."

"Well, well," he said hastily, "but I
protest

At sitting all night with you and your
quest.

Who's the next, and be quick." As if
riding a race

I dashed at my subject: "Let me intro-
duce Grace

Conkling, no one is so handy at brooks.
They chatter and spatter through all of
her books.

And her fish — every angler is on tenter-
hooks

Lest they should escape him. The same
with her birds.

My land, what a fluttering they make!
Quite two thirds

Of her work is concerned with them, so
that her pages

Present the appearance of so many cages
Then mountains — yes, mountains —

she crams them in too.

The little nearby ones all green, and all
blue

The more distant peaks. She is great or
perspective.

And whatever her theme, she is always selective.

Take her love-poems, for instance, she serves, piping hot,

A lyric of passion, and chooses the spot
For its setting somewhere where you go
in a yacht;

South America, Mexico, wherever not,
So there is a garden with grapefruit,
kumquat,

A score or two peach-trees and some
apricot.

For her flowers, one should be an en-
cyclopedia.

No less an abundance of knowledge the
medea

Could possibly be to surmount and re-
count 'em.

(Here I've got in a mess. There's no
rhyme except 'fount.' Hem!

Take no notice I beg of the exceedingly
thin ice

I'm skating on; if you find my heroine
nice,

Which she certainly must be to all
masculine eyes,

I care not a whit with what names I am
twitted.

On account of my subject, the claim's
manumitted.)

Now turn back six lines, so you capture
the gist

Of my tale where I left it — I will jot
down a list

Of a few of her flowers which must not
be missed.

There's magnolia first, of the kind grand-
iflora,

With its moons of blooms scenting the
air where Señora

Jimenez, Alvaro — take your pick, I
would banish

Such names if I could, but the Señora's
Spanish —

Walks under daturas whose cups of per-
fume

Hang above her, with jasmine so thick
there's scant room

To pass down the path to the beds where
the lilies

Are standing together in a stately and
still ease.

The dates are in blossom, or is it in
fruit? —

One should not make a list unless able
to do't.

And this Mexican flora trips any one's
foot —

Never mind, it's enough that the lady's
en route

To a clandestine tryst, when a tingling
sol fa

Shakes the garden to life, for he's
brought his guitar.

I acknowledge I've taken a few auto-
cratic

Liberties with my author, who's never
dramatic.

But the garden alone seemed to me
miasmatic,

With its scents and its sounds, but for
the rest solus.

If we must not embroider, why she must
parole us.

Since I've given no promise, and the
scene, without doubt,

Should have been there although the
poet left it out.

It shall stand in my version — and there's
a night-piece.

But what of the mornings, as soft as
crêpe-lisse

Till the mists burn away with the sun
and leave staring

A peacock-hued dome, with gilt cornices,
flaring

Above an old market-place crowded with
fig-trees

And the flame-coloured awnings of
booths where the big trees

Make a thunder-cloud shade, and
Giuseppe, l'elice,

(These Mexican names make our own
sound so screechy!)

Are vociferously selling figs, melons, and
grapes?

It's the rainbow gone mad in all colours
and shapes.

There are smoky blue plums and raw-
striped cucumbers,

Red slits of pomegranates, gold loquats,
the umbers

Of nuts and the green of almonds not yet
husked;

Huge elephant baskets of flowers all be-
tasked

With long sprays of yucca — the poet
has attacked us

With all of her armoury at once — spears
 of cactus
 Shoot out between passion-vines spread-
 ing their discus-
 Like blooms just above a bouquet of
 hibiscus.
 The trees, I observe, are all festooned
 with monkeys,
 Long necklaces of them, and the square's
 choked with donkeys.
 The bell in the peacock dome clatters
 and clangs,
 Parakeets flash through leaves like so
 many whiz-bangs
 On the fourth of July, there are orchids
 exploding
 New flowers each minute over hand-carts
 unloading
 Bread-fruit and bananas, and the hot, dry
 sirocco
 Tips it all to a sparkle so bright and
 rococo
 The book should be bound in a purple
 morocco
 If the contents and cover were made to
 agree,
 This dismal sage-green is a catastrophe;
 But what publisher thinks of aught else
 but his fee.
 I have written my best, but it's so multi-
 plex I can
 Never compete with her when she's on
 Mexican
 Horticulture, zoölogy, and I don't know
 what all,
 Unless I've Gray's 'Botany' handy, and
 Nuttall,
 With Wilson and Chapman close by on
 the table;
 And as to the speech, it is just so much
 Babel
 To me if each word is not tagged with
 a label
 In good easy English. Well, no matter
 for that,
 I've told you she's got every atmosphere
 pat.
 She's as happy with pine-trees and an
 orchard of apples
 And the clouds which a 'slender sky'
 scatters and dapples
 Over grass-and-stone hillsides, as with
 lotus-brimmed fountains,
 And I'll swear that no poet has done
 better with mountains.

Her flickers, and veeries, and finches, and
 thrushes
 Are as good as her nightingale hid in a
 bush is,
 And when she would sing of the Old
 Mohawk Trail
 I toss up my hat with a shout of 'All
 hail!
 Troubador of New England, who knows
 that white pine is
 Her very soul's self,' and I write in gold,
 'Finis!'
 "Dear me," said my friend, "so you think
 she's a laureate
 Of poor old New England." "If there's
 any one bore I hate
 More than another," I answered, "it's the
 man
 Who pretends to see farther than any
 one can.
 Considering we've Robinson, Miss
 Lowell, and Frost
 Such a statement were rash. I'm afraid
 you have lost
 Just the shade I intended; there's a dif-
 ference, be sure,
 Between a poet laureate and a trouba-
 dor."
 "The point is well taken," he admitted
 at once.
 "Was I laureate or troubador? The dis-
 tinction confronts
 Me now rather unpleasantly. For, was I
 able
 To go her one better in my famous
 'Fable'?
 That I loved my New England you'll find
 by the space
 I devoted to her in that book. Face to
 face
 With her new poets, I'm wondering
 who'll win in the race.
 Am I in the lead since they've quickened
 the pace?
 I'm beginning to doubt it as far as mere
 praise
 Counts at least, I was Frost and she
 mixed, hence my bays,
 If I really deserved any. But with this
 poetess
 I find myself back on old ground, none
 the less
 Delightful, be sure, and there is a slight
 change

In her manner, I do detect that, but her
range

Does not carry me out of the depth of
my sympathy."

"The next fellow will," was my succinct
reply.

"Alfred Kreymborg, deft master of the
oddest machine

Made of strings and of gut which I ever
have seen.

A hybrid of sorts yecept mandolute.

Queer instrument? Very. His voice is
the flute

Playing over the strings, and his songs
epigrams

Tinkled up into rhythm. Oh, yes, they're
called shams

By the public at large, but who wants a
large public?

Kreymborg's manner to his is a kiss and
a kick.

He's the monkey of poetry who climbs
on a stick,

But that's only his way to conceal by a
trick

The real truth he has. Oh, he's impolitic
To a fault, but the fellow is no lunatic.

Nor mountebank either, though some
people think

He has squeezed not two drops of his
blood in his ink

And regard him as jester with more than
suspicion.

The fact is he's an untaught, but natural
musician.

His poems and his tunes come straight
out of his pestle

And fall as they will. Unbaked clay's not
a vessel,

However, and though I believe he has
made

Some excellent poems, that's not really
his trade,

Which I grieve to admit consists largely
of bluffing.

The gems in his books are half smothered
in stuffing.

He's an ironist pure, but I can't call him
simple;

More than one of his efforts may be
classed as a pimple

On the fair face of poetry, but others de-
light us

As much for their beauty as the first
kind affright us

By their horrible ugliness, wry-formed
and waxy.

He's a man flinging queer little toys from
a taxi.

If you scramble round fast enough you
may pick a good one,

But the chances are ten to one you'll get
a wooden

Contraption of rude, creaky springs,
badly gilt,

Just words nailed together haphazard, no
hilt,

And no sense you can find. It's a real
'hunt the slipper'

To read what he writes, and you may
come a tripper

Or you may win a prize, that's the whole
proposition.

How does it affect his poetic position?

I tell you quite frankly I feel at a loss

For an answer to give you, we might try
a toss

Or leave it in peace on the lap of the
Gods.

To put it quite plainly, dear Sir, what's
the odds?

When we come to his singing, it's an-
other concern.

However on earth did the chap come to
learn

Of those strange sweeping chords and
that odd whispered singing

Which cleaves to the heart and sets the
nerves stinging,

And where did he find his sawed-off
mandolin

Or guitar, or banjo? Good Lord, it's a sin
When there is such an instrument no one

else knows it,

But the luckier for him, I say, and
therefore — *prositi!*

The poems he writes down never end,
scarce begin,

If the truth must be told; in the music,
a thin

Silver chord holds a something, a glitter
of fable,

And the tale and its moral lie string on a
cable,

Half-music, half-thought, but what we
have heard

Is more cello than music, more music
than word.

He's a poet in the core of him, a bit of
a clown,

And two-thirds of a vagabond drifting
 round town,
 Seeing whimsical nothings at every street
 corner.
 A lover possessed, an inveterate scomer,
 Engaged in a pulling of plums like Jack
 Horner —
 "There's the man, Alfred Kreymborg."
 "We had no counterpart
 To your monkey-musician. Do you call
 the thing art
 You've been talking about?" The old
 gentleman's tone
 Betrayed just a trace of annoyance. "I've
 shown
 You a figure, make of him whatever you
 can,
 To tag him as this or that's not in my
 plan.
 You asked me to give you each phase of
 the time."
 "And I could not stand Whitman be-
 cause he'd no rhyme!"
 He gasped. "You may banish all verse
 that's harmonious,
 But it's not so far short of being felo-
 nious
 When you ask us to substitute for it the
 simious.
 You will find what that means in the
 pages of Linnaeus.
 We raised roses, but you seem to culti-
 vate zinnias,
 Not to call your verse anything more
 ignominious."
 "You forget," I reminded him, "his
 mandolite;
 To judge him without it is hardly acute."
 The old gentleman suddenly turned and
 snapped "Nonsense!"
 "On the contrary, Sir, it's the *sine quâ*
non sense.
 We have Lindsay, a voice; and Kreym-
 borg, an instrument."
 "Is your poetry a junk-shop? I am now
 quite convinced you meant
 All this as hoaxing." I tried to protest.
 He went on in a stream like a person
 possessed:
 "A junk-shop indeed! There is Frost, a
 dim Buddha
 Set high on a shelf; there is Sandburg, a
 cruder
 Carved god of some sort, neither English
 nor Gothic —

Assyrian, Egyptian, perhaps — a huge
 Thothic
 Sacerdotal presentment placed over the
 door;
 There are two Chinese vases, a spy-glass,
 three score
 Or so dog's-eared books, flower-pots, and
 a spinet,
 This odd jumble's Miss Lowell; there's a
 little green linnet
 Hung up in a cage, Sara Teasdale, I
 think;
 And a battered old desk all bespattered
 with ink,
 That's Masters; and just up above is a
 palette
 Smudged over with paint, that is
 Fletcher; a mallet
 Thrown down on a heap of new books
 which it crushes
 Is Aiken; and there is a bundle of rushes
 Just picked and brought in to the shop to
 set off
 A stone-lantern — 'H.D.'; just behind is
 a trough
 To water poor readers, it's not overflow-
 ing
 But full to the brim and seems always
 just going
 To spill, but that never quite happens,
 you guess
 At once this is Robinson; in a recess
 Just under the counter are two or three
 chromos
 Of tropical scenes, Mrs. Conkling is
 those;
 And the blocks which you see have just
 come from the gilder
 I need hardly tell you are your precious
 Hilda,
 They are specially made to build Castles
 in Spain.
 There's your junk-shop of poets, and I
 tell you again
 I don't like to be quizzed." Poor old
 soul, he was furious,
 But when once convinced his suspicions
 were spurious
 He was eager as ever. "For," said I,
 "there's no quarrel.
 The shop sign's a wreath and it's pos-
 sibly laurel."
 "Perhaps I have half a suspicion of that
 Myself," he smiled broadly, "now give tit
 for tat,

And confound all my quondam ridiculous
ires
With something so pleasant and . . . "

"The Untermeyers!"

The shout which I gave cut his sentence
in two,

And we lost the last part in the hullabaloo
I made as I served up my marital dish.
"Two poets, and between them whatever
you wish.

If they haven't the depth, they've more
range than the Brownings,

It runs all the way from complexes to
clownings,

With love-songs so frank they pursue
more than follow man

Being made on the pattern approved by
King Solomon.

(My so spelling that name is nothing to
look solemn on,

I've a black-letter precedent one might
write a column on.

Orthographical pedantry was not in King
Solomon.)

At least hers are, a perfectly natural law
Vide Freud, D. H. Lawrence, and George
Bernard Shaw.

For woman possesses, it seems, an atomic
Attraction for man, and his serio-comic
Pretence of pursuit is a masculine blind
To keep up his prestige within his own
mind.

If the lady appears to be fleeing, the
stroke

Is a masterly one and just her little joke.
But when this same woman, in some
bright confection

Of boudoir attire, gives herself to reflec-
tion

And writes down her heart in a freak of
exposure,

The result will most certainly jar the
composure

Of elderly persons brought up more
demurely,

While youth will retire, with doors locked
securely,

And read what to them is a gorgeous dis-
play

Of Paradise opened on visiting day.

The best gifts of our time are these
pure revelations

Of facts as they are in all human rela-
tions

With no understatements or exaggera-
tions.

And the West is the East, with the puri-
tan night

Swallowed up in a gush of approaching
daylight —

At least, so our cherished delusion mis-
takes it,

And since everything is as man's attitude
makes it,

What the Orient knew we are learning
again

For the next generation to laud with
'Amen'

In this wise are the poems of Jean Unter-
meyer,

Though the whole of her output takes
less than a quire

Of paper to hold it. Not at all so with
Louis,

He's as rich and eclectic as a bowl of
chop-suey.

If his wife plays a timbrel, he plays a
ram's horn,

His ardour for worship is never outworn,
One of Joshua's soldiers, protecting his
candle

With the pitcher he eagerly holds by
the handle,

Tramping his turn at a long sentry-go
Round and round the high walls of our
new Jericho;

Or, again, on a harp which, if slightly
archaic,

Has lost nothing in tone or in timbre
since Hebraic

Psalmists once plucked it in stern exhor-
tations

Before kneeling hosts of then wandering
nations.

Through the streets of to-day, with his
shoulders set square,

He walks, full of business, and yet one's
aware

Of a something he sees which surrounds
and encloses

His vision, he might be just gazing on
Moses

Descending the mountain, but his tables
of stone

Have Marx written on them and Debs,
while his own

Name has no place at all, and that's
characteristic;

His ego's too eager to be egotistic.

When everything beckons, why sit at home brooding
 On the opposite wall; he's no taste for secluding
 Himself or his interests, and they're only controlled
 By the small slice of time which he happens to hold.
 Punctiliously present in this exact moment,
 His dates began when he learnt what 'proximo' meant.
 No glance of his, scanning the past, finds it prizable,
 The only real worth is in the realizable;
 Neither history nor legend induce him to vary
 His perfect allegiance to the mere temporary.
 When he takes on himself the rôle of appraiser,
 His words spout and gush like a Yellowstone geyser,
 At least for the poet whose political ways err
 From those of society, an apt paraphraser
 Of the poems of such men, he becomes a sharp razor
 To others, no hint of the sham sentimental
 Escapes his smooth blade, and he is not gentle
 With the scenes or the poses in which 'temperamental'
 Poets indulge, and he's scarcely parental
 To persons with leanings toward the transcendental.
 His dictums, it's true, are less poignant than plenty,
 And do not rank too high among *cognoscenti*,
 Who are usually college boys not quite turned twenty.
 He has a blind spot; he cannot keep his eye on
 A world without man. Why, a fresh dandelion
 Is nothing to him without someone to pick it,
 Observe it alone and he hands you the ticket
 For exit at once, and it's not a return check.
 He hopes in this way to act as a stern check

On all those untoward imaginative flights
 In which he is sure he describes signal-lights
 Of a shower of earth-wrecking meteorites.
 Now why should a man who is so pyrotechnical
 Find a mere meteoric display apoplectical.
 While many consider it a beautiful spectacle?
 That's a matter for wonder; but, speaking of rockets,
 He carries them round like small change in his pockets.
 A touch and they're off, and the whiz and the flare
 And the burst of bright balls are quite his affair.
 What a crackle of rhymes! They go off like red crackers
 Beneath a tin pan. And there are some whackers
 Exploding at intervals when you least expect them,
 And long trailing assonances set to connect them.
 His wit is a pin-wheel which at first jerks and spits
 Then whirls suddenly round as though ten thousand fits
 Were in it, and all is one sparkling gyration
 In every known manner of versification.
 But the best of his fire-works comprise his set-pieces
 Which are really so many bright-coloured *esquisses*.
 (Please pardon a liberty in pronunciation.
Le mot juste, I believe, needs no justification,
 Even when it involves a slight deviation
 From the speech of a friendly but jaw-breaking nation,
 Who, I trust, will regard this brief explanation
 In the light of a willing, though painful, libation.)
 But how I run on! To return to my symbol:
 A bare two or three poets have ever been nimble
 Enough to depict their confrères and show them
 Drawn to scale in each feature as all their friends know them.

Just glance at them now, each hung on a
hook

Awaiting the match — Ftt! Presto! Now,
look —

How they flicker and burn, each one to
his trick:

There are Robinson's quatrains, Frost's
long, pliant stick

Of blank-verse which he carries when
taking his walks,

And Sandburg with his suit-case all
crammed full of talks

With murderers and hobos and such
worth while gentry;

Here is Lindsay retreating at speed to the
entry

To stand on the stair and harangue new
arrivals

With the very same stunts they employ
at revivals,

While Amy Lowell, close by the library
door,

Announces her theories and tries hard
to score

More disciples than Lindsay; though,
with his and her medium,

It's a matter of choice which produces
least tedium.

Whoever the poet and whatever his
foibles,

Even dull ones like — well, I won't
say — are enjoyables

When he touches them up to a glare
with his slow-match,

At this sort of thing every one else is no
match

For him, and the best simply rank as
'—and Other Poets.'

A terrible fellow with his black line to
smother poets,

And that line is become the poetical
plank

From which he dives into posterity's tank.

It's a curious conceit, and his one bit of
swank.

To flaunt himself under a long line of
blank.

But what poet, quick or dead, would dare
to decline

An immortal existence conferred by one
line.

Take it then, Untermeyer, irrepressible
Louis,

And observe, as you touch it, that the
leaves are still dewy.

That dew is the proof that it's not
bombazine,

One has to be careful with a housewife
like Jean.

The lady, you know, is a trifle impulsive,
And I should not like my gift to receive

a propulsive

Reception. For fame's rather like mil-
linery.

To-day it's a blossom, to-morrow a cherry,
The day after, glass flowers in some

cemetery.

But who, even in fame, would remain
stationary?

Not you certainly. Louis, your deepest
devotion

Is involved in this question, but you
have no notion

How nearly you come to perpetual mo-
tion."

Here I ended abruptly. When he's car-
ried a man

To the centre of movement, the historian
Does well to leave off. I left off there-
fore.

My old friend somewhat wearily asked,
"Is there more?"

"A few odds and ends, but not much
you need heed."

I replied. "Very well, run them over at
speed."

He commanded.

Now if he had wielded a bludgeon
I could not have more quickly obeyed,

no curmudgeon

Could have forced my direction more
surely than he did.

His imperious courtesy was all that I
needed

To start off again with my tale: "The
expatriates

Come next." I began, "but the man who
expatriates

Upon them must go all yclad in cold
steel

Since these young men are both of them
most *difficile*.

And each is possessed of a gift for satire.
Their forked barbs would pierce any usual

attire.

In order of merit, if not of publicity,
I will take Eliot first, though it snacks

of duplicity

To award Ezra Pound the inferior place

As he simply won't run if not first in a race.

Years ago, 'twould have been the other way round,

With Eliot a rather bad second to Pound.
But Pound has been woefully free with the mustard

And so occupied has quite ruined his custard.

No poems from his pen, just spleen on the loose.

And a man who goes on in that way cooks his goose.

T. S. Eliot's a very unlike proposition,
He has simply won through by process of attrition.

Where Pound played the fool, Eliot acted the wiscacre;

Eliot works in his garden, Pound stultifies his acre.

Eliot's always engaged digging fruit out of dust;

Pound was born in an orchard, but his trees have the rust.

Eliot's mind is perpetually fixed and alert;
Pound goes off anywhere, anyhow, like a squirt.

Pound believes he's a thinker, but he's far too romantic;

Eliot's sure he's a poet when he's only pedantic.

But Eliot has raised pedantry to a pitch,
While Pound has upset romance into a ditch.

Eliot fears to abandon an old masquerade;
Pound's one perfect happiness is to parade.

Eliot's learning was won at a very great price;

What Pound calls his learning he got in a trice.

Eliot knows what he knows, though he cannot digest it;

Pound knows nothing at all, but has frequently guessed it.

Eliot builds up his essays by a process of massing;

Pound's are mostly hot air, what the vulgar call 'gassing.'

Eliot lives like a snail in his shell, pen protruding;

Pound struts like a cock, self-adored, self-deluding.

Pound's darling desire is his ego's projection;

Eliot tortures his soul with a dream of perfection.

Pound's an ardent believer in the value of noise;

Eliot strains every nerve to attain a just poise.

Each despises his fellows, for varying reasons;

Each one is a traitor, but with different treasons.

Each has left his own country, but Pound is quite sick of it,

While for Eliot's sojourn, he is just in the nick of it.

Pound went gunning for trouble, and got it, for cause;

Eliot, far more astute, has deserved his applause.

Each has more brain than heart, but while one man's a critic

The other is more than two-thirds tympanitic.

Both of them are book-men, but where Eliot has found

A horizon in letters, Pound has only found Pound.

Each man feels himself so little complete

That he dreads the least commerce with the man in the street;

Each imagines the world to be leagued in a dim pact

To destroy his immaculate taste by its impact.

To conceive such a notion, one might point out slyly,

Would scarcely occur to an author more highly

Original; such men seldom bother their wits

With outsiders at all, whether fits or misfits.

Where they are, whom they see, is a matter of sheer

Indifference to a poet with his own atmosphere

To exist in, and such have no need to be preachy

Anent commonplaceness since they can't write a *cliché* —

In toto, at least, and it's *toto* that grounds

All meticulous poets like the Eliots and Pounds.

Taking up Eliot's poetry, it's a blend of intensive

And elegant satire with a would-be offensive
 Kind of virulent diatribe, and neither
 sort's lacking
 In the high type of polish we demand of
 shoe-blackening.
 Watteau if you like, arm in arm with
 Laforgue,
 And both of these worthies laid out in
 a morgue.
 The poems are expert even up to a vice,
 But they're chilly and dead like corpses
 on ice.
 Now a man who's reluctant to heat his
 work through,
 I submit, is afraid of what that work will
 do
 On its own, with its muscles and sinews
 unfrozen.
 Something, I must think, which he would
 not have chosen.
 Is there barely a clue here that the action
 of heat
 Might reveal him akin to the man in the
 street?
 For his brain — there's no doubt that
 is up on a steeple,
 But his heart might betray him as one
 of the people.
 A fearful dilemma! We can hardly abuse
 him
 For hiding the damaging fact and excuse
 him
 If it really be so, and we've more than
 a hint of it,
 Although I, for one, like him better by
 dint of it.
 Since the poet's not the half of him, we
 must include
 The critical anchorite of his 'Sacred
 Wood.'
 'This slim duodecimo you must have
 your eye on
 If you'd be up to date,' say his friends.
 He's a sly one
 To have chosen this format — the book's
 heavy as iron.
 I'm acutely aware that its grave erudi-
 tion
 Is quite in the line of a certain tradi-
 tion,
 That one which is commonly known as
 tuition.
 To read it is much like a lengthy so-
 journings

In at least two or three institutions of
 learning.
 But, being no schoolboy, I find I'm not
 burning
 For this sort of instruction, and vote for
 adjourning.
 What the fellow's contrived to stuff into
 his skull
 May be certainly classed as a pure miracle.
 But the way he imparts it is terribly dull.
 This may not be fair, for I've only begun
 it.
 And one should not pronounce on a book
 till one's done it.
 But I've started so often, in so many
 places,
 I think, had there been any livelier spaces
 I must have encountered at least one of
 those
 Before falling, I say it with shame, in a
 doze.
 We must take Ezra Pound from a dif-
 ferent angle:
 He's a belfry of excellent chimes run to
 jangle
 By being too often and hurriedly tugged
 at,
 And even, when more noise was wanted,
 just slugged at
 And hammered with anything there was
 lying round.
 Such delicate bells could not stand so
 much Pound.
 Few men have to their credit more
 excellent verses
 Than he used to write, and even his
 worse is
 Much better than most people's good.
 He'd a flair
 For just the one word indispensably there,
 But which few could have hit on. An-
 other distinction
 Was the way he preserved fledgeling poets
 from extinction.
 Had he never consented to write when
 the urge
 To produce was not on him, he'd have
 been on the verge
 Of a great reputation by now, but his
 shoulder
 Had always its chip, and Ezra's a scolder.
 Off he flew, giving nerves and brain up
 to the business
 In a crowing excitement not unmixed
 with dizziness,

Whenever he could get any sort of newspaper
 To lend him a column and just let him vapour.
 But while he was worrying his gift of invention
 For adequate means to ensure the prevention
 Of any one's getting what he had not got,
 His uncherished talent succumbed to dry rot.
 When, after the battle, he would have employed her,
 He learnt, to his cost, that he had destroyed her.
 Now he does with her ghost, and the ghosts of the hosts
 Of troubadors, minstrels, and kings, for he boasts
 An acquaintance with persons of whose very names
 I am totally ignorant, likewise their fames.
 The foremost, of course, is Bertrand de Born,
 He's a sort of pervasively huge leprecaun
 Popping out from Pound's lines where you never expect him.
 He is our poet's chief lar, so we must not neglect him.
 There is Pierre de Maensac, and Pierre won the singing—
 Where or how I can't guess, but Pound sets his fame ringing
 Because he was *dreitz hom* (whatever that is)
 And had De Tierci's wife; what happened to his
 We don't know, in fact we know nothing quite clearly,
 For Pound always treats his ghosts cavalierly.
 There is John Borgia's bath, and be sure that he needed it;
 Aurunculeia's shoe, but no one much heeded it.
 There's a chap named Navighero and another Barabello,
 Who prods a Pope's elephant; and one Mozarello;
 Savairic Mauleon — Good Lord, what a dance
 Of impossible names! First I think we're in France,

Then he slides in Odysseus, and Eros, and Atthis —
 But I'm not to be fooled in my Greek, that's what that is.
 Yet, look, there's Italian sticking out in italics
 And French in plain type, the foreign vocalics
 Do give one the feeling of infinite back-ground,
 When it's all just a trick of that consummate quack, Pound,
 To cheat us to thinking there's something behind it.
 But, when nothing's to find, it's a hard job to find it.
 The tragedy lies in the fact that the man
 Had a potentiality such as few can
 Look back or forward to; had he but kept it,
 There's no bar in all poetry but he might have leapt it.
 Even now, I believe, if he'd let himself grow,
 He might start again. . . "We will have no 'although'
 In your gamut of poets. Your man is a victim
 Of expatriation, and, as usual, it's licked him.
 It has happened more times than I care to reflect,
 And the general toll is two countries' neglect."
 The old gentleman sighed. "I presume that you've finished,"
 He went on at last. "The ranks are diminished,"
 I answered, "but still there remain one or two
 Whose names, at the least, I must pass in review.
 There's William Rose Benét, his poems have no beaters
 In their own special *genre*; he's a wonder with metres,
 A sleight of hand artist, and one of his mysteries
 Is his cabinet trick with all the world's histories.
 There's Bodenheim, trowel in hand, bent on laying
 A tessellate floor with the words he is saying.

Squares of marble, moss-agate, and jade,
 and carnelian,
Byzantium in pleno, never Delphic nor
 Delion.
 A perfect example of contemporaneity,
 But with too little force and too much
 femininity.
 The man's a cascade of verbose spou-
 taneity.
 Except when he's giving Advice, there he
 shines
 And *La Fontaine* plays hide and seek in
 his lines.
 As a maker of Fables, no one ever quar-
 rels
 With his style, and old Aesop must look
 to his laurels.
 There's another young man who strums
 a clavier
 And prints a new poem every third or
 fourth year.
 Looking back, I don't know that anything
 since
 Has delighted me more than his 'Peter
 Quince.'
 He has published no book and adopts this
 as pose,
 But it's rather more likely, I think, to
 suppose
 The particular gift he's received from the
 Muses
 Is a tufted green field under whose grass
 there oozes
 A seeping of poetry, like wind through a
 cloister;
 On occasion it rises, and then the field's
 moister
 And he has a poem if he'll trouble to
 hale it,
 Address it to 'Poetry,' and afterwards mail
 it.
 His name, though the odds overbalance
 the evens
 Of those who don't know it as yet's
 Wallace Stevens,
 But it might be John Doe for all he
 seems to care —
 A little fine work scattered into the
 air
 By the wind, it appears, and he quite
 unaware
 Of the fact, since his motto's a cool
 'laissez-faire.'
 There's Edna Millay with her 'Aria da
 Cap-

O'h, she dealt all society a pretty sharp
 rap
 With that bauble of hers, be it drama or
 fable,
 Which I certainly trust won't be laid
 on the table
 In my time. Her 'Bean-Stalk' is a nice
 bit of greenery,
 For one of her charms is her most
 charming scenery,
 Few can handle more deftly this sort of
 machinery.
 But I must call a halt, or your brain will
 be flooded
 With big poets, and little poets, and
 poets not yet budded."
 "Have you really so many?" my old
 friend desired
 To know. "If you count all the ones
 who've aspired,
 I could go on all night. You see we have
 got
 A Renaissance on." "Dear me, I forgot,"
 He remarked somewhat dryly. "We were
 not renaissance,
 But also I note we were far less com-
 placent
 Than you seem to be, and this beggar-
 my-neighbour
 Came you all indulge in was no part of
 our labour."
 "No," I told him, "you played on a pipe
 and a tabor;
 We go girt with a shield and drawing a
 sabre.
 And yet you, with *Miranda*. . ." I
 talked to the swell
 Of the wide-running river, to a clock-
 striking bell.
 There was no one beside me. A wave
 caught the sedge
 Of the bank and went rustling along its
 soft edge.
 Behind me a motor honked twice, and
 the bridges
 Glared suddenly out of the dusk, twink-
 ling ridges
 Notched into the dim river-line. Wind
 was whirling
 The plane-trees about, it sent the waves
 curling
 Across one another in a chuckle of
 laughter —
 And I recollect nothing that happened
 thereafter.

Who my gentleman was, if you hazard
 a guess,
 I will tell you I know nothing more,
 nothing less,
 Than I here have set forth. For I never
 have met him
 From that day to this, or I should have
 beset him
 With questions, I think. My unique
 perseverance
 Kept me haunting the river for his re-
 appearance,
 Armed with two or three books which
 might serve as a primer
 To point my remarks, for I am no skim-
 mer,
 When I push at a wheel it must go or
 I'll break it,
 Once embarked on a mission I never
 forsake it.
 Did he guess my intention and think
 he'd enough
 Of me and my poets, a sufficient rebuff;
 But I've never believed he went off in a
 huff.
 Did I dream him perhaps? Was he only
 a bluff
 Of the past making sport with my brain?
 But that's stuff!
 Take it what way you like, if he were a
 spectre
 Then the ghosts of old poets have re-
 ceived a correcter
 Account than they had of us, and may
 elect a

Prize winner and vote over post-prandial
 nectar.
 Suppose that, before awarding the prize,
 The poets had determined to sift truth
 from lies
 And had sent an ambassador down to
 enquire
 Whose flames were cut tinsel and whose
 were real fire.
 Selecting a man once employed in the
 trade,
 They had only to wait the report that he
 made
 And discuss it at *al fresco* lunch in the
 shade
 Of some cloudy and laurel-embowered
 arcade.
 Supposing it happened that their emis-
 sary
 Determined to take me as a tutelary
 Genius to guide him, and after he'd
 pumped me
 Of all that I knew, quite naturally
 dumped me
 And returned whence he came. You call
 this bizarre?
 But then, after all, so many things
 are!
 If it were so, at least the conclave knows
 who's who,
 And will see there's no reason at all to
 pooh-pooh.
 I, for one, am most eager to know what
 they'll do.
 Aren't you?

WHAT'S O'CLOCK

EAST, WEST, NORTH, AND SOUTH OF A MAN

I

He rides a white horse,
Mary Madonna,
Dappled as clouds are dappled,

O Mary, Mary,
And the leather of his harness is the
colour of the sky.

On his head is a casque with an azure
plume
Which none may observe with unswerv-
ing eyes.

A proud gentleman, Mary Madonna.
A knight to fill the forest, riding it cross-
wise,

O Mary, Mary.
His hoof-prints dint the beech-mast,
His plume brushes the golden leaves.

No flute man this, to sigh at a lady's
elbow.

This is a trumpet fellow, proper for
jousting or battle,

Mary Madonna,
To hack an enemy to pieces, and scale
his castle wall.

O Mary, Mary,
A point for piercing, an edge for shearing,
a weight for pounding, a voice for
thundering,

And a fan-gleam light to shine down little
alleys

Where twisted houses make a jest of day.

There are dead men in his hand,

Mary Madonna,
And sighing women out beyond his
flinking.

O Mary, Mary,
He will not linger here or anywhere.
He will go about his business with an
ineradicable complaisance,
Leaving his dead to rot, his women to
weep and regret, his sons to wax
into his likeness,
Never dreaming that the absurd lie he
believes in

Is a gesture of Fate forcing him to the
assumption of a vast importance
Quite other than the blazoning of cere-
monial banners to wave above a
tomb.

II

Hot with oranges and purples,
In a flowing robe of a marigold colour,
He sweeps over September spaces.

Scheherezade, do you hear him,
And the clang of his scimitar knocking
on the gates?

The tawny glitter of his turban,
Is it not dazzling —

With the saffron jewel set like a sun-
flower in the midst?

The brown of his face!
Aye, the brown like the heart of a sun-
flower.

Who are you to aspire beyond the petals,
To touch the golden burning beneath the
marigold robe?

His sash is magnificence clasped by an
emerald;

His scimitar is the young moon hanging
before a sun-set;

His voice is the sun in mid-heaven
Pouring on whirled ochre dahlias;

His fingers, the flight of Autumn wasps
through a honey-coloured afternoon.

So, Scheherezade, he has passed the
dragon fountains

And is walking up the marble stairway,
stopping to caress the peacocks.

He will lean above you, Scheherezade,
like September above an orchard of
apples.

He will fill you with the sweetness of
spice-fed flames.

Will you burn, Scheherezade, as flowers
burn in September sunlight?

Hush, then, for flame is silence,
And silent is the penetrating of the
sun.

The dragon fountains splash in the court-
yards,

And the peacocks spread their tails.

There are eyes in the tails of the peacocks,
But the palace windows are shuttered and barred.

III

Pipkins, pans, and pannikins,
China teapots, tin and pewter,
Baskets woven of green rushes.
Maudlin, Jennifer, and Prue,
What is lacking in your kitchens?
Are you needing skewers or thimbles,
Spools of cotton, knots of ribbon,
Or a picture for your pantry,
Or a rag-rug for the bed-side?
Plodding, plodding, through the dusty
Lanes between the hawthorn hedges,
My green wheels all white and dusty,
I as dusty as a miller,
White as any clown among them
Dancing on the London stages.
Here I have Grimaldi's latest,
Songs and ballads, sheets of posies
For your feet to ring-a-rosy.
Songs to make you sigh and shudder,
Songs to win you bright eye-glances,
Choruses, and glees, and catches.
Do your cupboards need refilling?
Take a peep into these hampers.
I have goods to loose your purse-strings:
Smocks, and shifts, and fine clocked
stockings
Aprons of a dozen sizes,
Muslin dresses sprigged and patterned.
Can you look and not be buying?
Maudlin, Jennifer, and Prue,
Here are dainties for sweetheartings,
Tinsel crackers plumped with mottoes,
Twisted barley sticks and pear-drops.
Here are ear-rings, chains, and brooches,
Choose what gift you'll have him give
you.
If the sweetheart days are over,
I have silver forks and bodkins,
Leather breeches, flannel bed-gowns,
Spectacles for eyes grown feeble,
Books to read with them and candles
To light up the page of evenings.
Toys, too, to delight the children,
Rocking-horses, tops, and marbles,
Dolls with jointed arms, and flying
Kites, and hoops, and even the Royal
Game of Goose the world is playing.
When I camp out on a common,

Underneath an oak or linden,
And my horse crops at his supper,
Finding it along the hedge-rows,
Then I play at Goose with one hand
Taking sides against the other.
First my right hand holds the dice-cup,
Then my left, each has its counter.
'Tis a pastime never tires.
Coppers, coppers, for the pedlar.
Maudlin, Jennifer, and Prue,
Fare you well, I must be jogging.
Horse-bells tinkle at the lane-sides,
Green wheels growing whiter, whiter,
Lurching van of whims and whimsies
Vanishing into the distance.

IV

Who would read on a ladder?
But who can read without a ladder?
Cheerful paradox to be resolved never.
Book by book, he steps up and off to all
the four quarters
Of all the possible distances.
Minerva have a care of him,
For surely he has none for himself.
His eyes are dim with the plague of print,
But he believes them eagle-seeing.
His spectacles have grown to his nose,
But he is unaware of the fact since he
never takes them off.
A little black cap on his head;
A rusty dressing-gown, with the quilts
run together,
To keep out the cold;
A window out of which he never looks;
A chair from which he never rises.
But do you not know a wharf-side when
you see it,
And are you not moved at watching the
putting off of the caravels of dream?
Food gets into his mouth by accident
As though fish swam the seas to come
there,
And cattle crowded the thoroughfares to
reach his lips.
If there are intermediaries, he is un-
conscious of them,
As he is of everything but his cat,
Who shares his vigils
And has discovered the art of projecting
herself into his visions.
He loves a thousand ladies, and fore-
gathers with a thousand caravans.
To-day is as remote as yesterday,

And he is avid of either with the intensity of a partaker of each;
He could hobnob as blithely with Julius Caesar as with King George or Samuel Compers,

And his opinions on affairs of the moment are those of an eye-witness
Although he never sets foot out-of-doors.
Indeed, Minerva, you should watch the step of this gentleman,

For he runs so swiftly past events and monuments it seems incredible he should not trip.

The walls of forbidden cities fall before him;

He has but to tap a sheepskin to experience kingdoms,
And circumstance drips from his fingers like dust.

An habituated eye sees much through a pin-prick,

And are not his observations folio wide?
He eats the centuries

And lives a new life every twenty-four hours,

So lengthening his own to an incalculable figure.

If you think you see only an old man mouldering between four walls,

You are greatly mistaken.

Minerva over the door could tell you better

If her stone face would speak.

Talk to him and he will not hear you;

Write a book and he knows you better than you know yourself.

Draw the curtains, then, and bring in tea, with plenty of buttered scones.

Since neither the old gentleman nor Minerva will speak to us,

I think we had best ignore them and go on as we are.

EVELYN RAY

No decent man will cross a field
Laid down to hay, until its yield

Is cut and cocked, yet there was the track

Going in from the lane and none coming back.

But that was afterwards; before,
The field was smooth as a sea off shore

On a shimmering afternoon, waist-high
With bent, and red top, and timothy,

Lush with oat grass and tall fescue,
And the purple green of Kentucky blue;

A noble meadow, so broad each way
It took three good scythes to mow in a day.

Just where the field broke into a wood
A knotted old catalpa stood.

And in the old catalpa-tree
A cat-bird sang immoderately.

The sky above him was round and big
And its centre seemed just over his twig.

The earth below him was fresh and fair,
With the sun's long fingers everywhere.

The cat-bird perched where a great leaf hung,

And the great leaf tilted, and flickered, and swung.

The cat-bird sang with a piercing glee
Up in the sun-specked catalpa-tree.

He sang so loud and he sang so long
That his ears were drowned in his own sweet song.

But the little peering leaves of grass
Shook and sundered to let them pass,

To let them pass, the men who heard
Nothing the grass said, nothing the bird.

Each man was still as a shining stone,
Each man's head was a buzzing bone

Wherein two words screeched in and out
Like a grinding saw with its turn about:

"Evelyn Ray," each stone man said,
And the words cut back and forth through his head,

And each of them wondered if he were dead.

The cat-bird sang with his head cocked up
Gazing into the sky's blue cup.

The grasses waved back into place,
The sun's long fingers stroked each face,

Each grim, cold face that saw no sun.
And the feet led the faces on and on.

They stopped beside the catalpa-tree,
Said one stone face to the other: "See!"

The other face had nothing to say,
Its lips were frozen on "Evelyn Ray."

They laid their hats in the tall green
grass
Where the crickets and grasshoppers pass
and pass.

They hung their coats in the crotch of a
pine
And paced five feet in an even line.

They measured five paces either way,
And the saws in their heads screeched
"Evelyn Ray."

The cat-bird sang so loud and clear
He heard nothing at all, there was nothing
to hear.

Even the swish of long legs pushing
Through grass had ceased, there was only
the hushing

Of a windless wind in the daisy tops,
And the jar stalks make when a grass-
hopper hops.

Every now and then a bee boomed over
The black-eyed Susans in search of clover,

And crickets shrilled as crickets do:
One — two. One — two.

The cat-bird sang with his head in the
air,
And the sun's bright fingers poked here
and there,

Past leaf, and branch, and needle, and
cone.
But the stone men stood like men of
stone.

Each man lifted a dull stone hand
And his fingers felt like weaving sand,

And his feet seemed standing on a ball
Which tossed and turned in a waterfall.

Each man heard a shot somewhere
Dropping out of the distant air.

But the screaming saws no longer said
"Evelyn Ray," for the men were dead.

.
I often think of Evelyn Ray.
What did she do, what did she say?
Did she ever chance to pass that way? !

I remember it as a lovely spot
Where a cat-bird sang. When he heard
the shot,
Did he fly away? I have quite forgot.

When I went there last, he was singing
again
Through a little fleeting, misty rain,
And pine-cones lay where they had lain.

This is the tale as I heard it when
I was young from a man who was three-
score and ten.
A lady of clay and two stone men.

A pretty problem is here, no doubt,
If you have a fancy to work it out:
What happens to stone when clay is
about?

Muse upon it as long as you will,
I think myself it will baffle your skill,
And your answer will be what mine is —
nil.

But every sunny Summer's day
I am teased with the thought of Evelyn
Ray,
Poor little image of painted clay.
And Heigh-o! I say.
What if there be a judgment-day?

What if all religions be true,
And Gabriel's trumpet blow for you
And blow for them — what will you do?

Evelyn Ray, will you rise alone?
Or will your lovers of dull grey stone
Pace beside you through the wan

Twilight of that bitter day
To be judged as stone and judged as
clay,
And no one to say the judgment nay?

Better be nothing, Evelyn Ray,
A handful of buttercups that sway
In the wind for a children's holiday.

For earth to earth is the best we know,
Where the good blind worms push to
and fro
Turning us into the seeds which grow,

And lovers and ladies are dead indeed,
Lost in the sap of a flower seed.
Is this, think you, a sorry creed?

Well, be it so, for the world is wide
And opinions jostle on every side.
What has always hidden will always hide.

And every year when the fields are high
With oat grass, and red top, and timothy,
I know that a creed is the shell of a lie.

Peace be with you, Evelyn Ray,
And to your lovers, if so it may,
For earth made stone and earth made
clay.

THE SWANS

The swans float and float
Along the moat
Around the Bishop's garden,
And the white clouds push
Across a blue sky
With edges that seem to draw in and
harden.

Two slim men of white bronze
Beat each with a hammer on the end of
a rod
The hours of God.
Striking a bell,
They do it well.
And the echoes jump, and tinkle, and
swell
In the Cathedral's carved stone polygons.

The swans float
About the moat,
And another swan sits still in the air
Above the old inn.

He gazes into the street
And swims the cold and the heat,
He has always been there,
At least so say the cobbles in the square.
They listen to the beat
Of the hammered bell,
And think of the feet
Which beat upon their tops;
But what they think they do not tell.

And the swans who float
Up and down the moat
Gobble the bread the Bishop feeds them.
The slim bronze men beat the hour again,
But only the gargoyles up in the hard
blue air heed them.

When the Bishop says a prayer,
And the choir sing "Amen,"
The hammers break in on them there:
Clang! Clang! Beware! Beware!
The carved swan looks down at the
passing men.
And the cobbles wink: "An hour has
gone again."
But the people kneeling before the
Bishop's chair
Forget the passing over the cobbles in
the square.

An hour of day and an hour of night,
And the clouds float away in a red-
splashed light.
The sun, quotha? or white, white
Smoke with fire all alight.

An old roof crashing on a Bishop's tomb,
Swarms of men with a thirst for room,
And the footsteps blur to a shower,
shower, shower,
Of men passing — passing — every hour,
With arms of power, and legs of power,
And power in their strong, hard minds.
No need then
For the slim bronze men
Who beat God's hours: Prime, Tierce,
None.

Who wants to hear? No one.
We will melt them, and mold them,
And make them a stem
For a banner gorged with blood,
For a blue-mouthed torch.
So let the men rush like clouds,
They strike their iron edges on the
Bishop's chair

And fling down the lanterns by the tower
stair.

They rip the Bishop out of his tomb
And break the mitre off of his head.
"See," say they, "the man is dead;
He cannot shiver or sing.
We'll toss for his ring."

The cobbles see this all along the street
Coming — coming — on countless feet.
And the clockmen mark the hours as they
go.

But slow — slow —
The swans float
In the Bishop's moat.
And the inn swan
Sits on and on,
Staring before him with cold glass eyes.
Only the Bishop walks serene,
Pleased with his church, pleased with his
house,
Pleased with the sound of the hammered
bell,
Beating his doom.
Saying "Boom! Boom! Room! Room!"
He is old, and kind, and deaf, and blind,
And very, very pleased with his charming
moat
And the swans which float.

ONCE JERICO

Walking in the woods one day,
I came across a great river of rye
Sweeping up between tall pine-trees.
The grey-green heads of the rye
Jostled and flaunted
And filled all the passage with a tossing
Of bright-bearded ears,
It was very fine,
Marching and bending
Under the smooth, wide undulation of
the upper branches of pines.

"Yi! Yi!" cried the little yellow cinque-
foil.

"What is this bearded army which
marches upon us?"

And the loosestrife called out that some-
body was treading on its toes.

But the rye never heeded.

"Bread! Bread!" it shouted, and wagged
its golden beards.

"Bread conquering the forest."

I stood with the little cinquefoil

Crushed back against a bush of sheep's
laurel.

"I am sorry if I crowd you," said I.

"But the rye is marching
And the green and yellow banners blind
me,

Also the clamour of the great trumpets
Is confusing."

"But you are trampling me down,"
wailed the loosestrife.

"Alas! Even so.

Yet do not blame me,

For I too have scarcely room to stand."

Then a gust of wind ran upon the tall
rye,

And it flung up its glittering helmets and
shouted "Bread!" again and again.

And the hubbub of it rolled superbly
under the balancing pines.

"Three times the trumpets," thought I,
And I picked the cinquefoil.

"Why not on my writing-table," I said,
caressing its petals with my finger.

And that, I take it, is the end of the
story.

MERELY STATEMENT

You sent me a sprig of mignonette,
Cool-coloured, quiet, and it was wet
With green sea-spray, and the salt and
the sweet

Mingled to a fragrance weary and dis-
creet

As a harp played softly in a great room
at sunset.

You said: "My sober mignonette
Will brighten your room and you will
not forget."

But I have pressed your flower and laid
it away

In a letter, tied with a ribbon knot.

I have not forgot.

But there is a passion-flower in my vase
Standing above a close-cleared space
In the midst of a jumble of papers and
books.

The passion-flower holds my eyes,
And the light-under-light of its blue and
purple dyes

Is a hot surprise.

How then can I keep my looks
 From the passion-flower leaning sharply
 over the books?
 When one has seen
 The difficult magnificence of a queen
 (On one's table,
 Is one able
 To observe any colour in a mignonette?
 I will not think of sunset, I crave the
 dawn,
 With its rose-red light on the wings of a
 swan,
 And a queen pacing slowly through the
 Parthenon,
 Her dress a stare of purple between pillars
 of stone.

FOOTING UP A TOTAL

I moved to the sound of gold, and brass,
 and heavily-clashed silver.
 From the towers, the watchers see the
 flags of my coming;
 Tall magenta flags
 Stinging against a pattern of light blue.
 Trumpets and tubas
 Exult for me before the walls of cities,
 And I pass the gates entangled in a dance
 of lifted tambourines.

But you—you come only as a harebell
 comes;
 One day there is nothing, and the next
 your steepled bells are all,
 The rest is background.
 You are neither blue, nor violet, nor red,
 But all these colours blent and faded to
 a charming weariness of tone.
 I glare; you blossom.
 Yes, alas! and when they have clanged
 me to my grave
 Wrapped gaudily in pale blue and
 magenta;
 When muted bugles and slacked drums
 Have brayed a last quietus;
 What then, my friend?

Why, someone coming from the funeral
 Will see you standing, nodding under-
 neath a hedge
 (Picking or not is nothing).
 Will that person remember bones and
 shouting do you think?
 I fancy he will listen to the music

Shaken so lightly from your whispering
 bells
 And think how very excellent a thing
 A flower growing in a hedge most surely
 is.
 And so, a fig for rotting carcasses!

Waiter, bring me a bottle of Lachryma
 Christi,
 And mind you don't break the seal.
 Your health, my highly unsuccessful con-
 frère,
 Rocking your seed-bells while I drift to
 ashes.
 The future is the future, therefore —
 Damn you!

TWENTY-FOUR HOKKU ON
A MODERN THEME

I

Again the larkspur,
 Heavenly blue in my garden.
 They, at least, unchanged.

II

How have I hurt you?
 You look at me with pale eyes,
 But these are my tears.

III

Morning and evening —
 Yet for us once long ago
 Was no division.

IV

I hear many words.
 Set an hour when I may come
 Or remain silent.

V

In the ghostly dawn
 I write new words for your ears —
 Even now you sleep.

VI

This then is morning.
 Have you no comfort for me
 Cold-coloured flowers?

VII

My eyes are weary
Following you everywhere.
Short, oh short, the days!

VIII

When the flower falls
The leaf is no more cherished.
Every day I fear.

IX

Even when you smile
Sorrow is behind your eyes.
Pity me, therefore.

X

Laugh — it is nothing.
To others you may seem gay,
I watch with grieved eyes.

XI

Take it, this white rose.
Stems of roses do not bleed;
Your fingers are safe.

XII

As a river-wind
Hurling clouds at a bright moon,
So am I to you.

XIII

Watching the iris,
The faint and fragile petals —
How am I worthy?

XIV

Down a red river
I drift in a broken skiff.
Are you then so brave?

XV

Night lies beside me
Chaste and cold as a sharp sword.
It and I alone.

XVI

Last night it rained.
Now, in the desolate dawn,
Crying of blue jays.

XVII

Foolish so to grieve,
Autumn has its coloured leaves —
But before they turn?

XVIII

Afterwards I think:
Poppies bloom when it thunders,
Is this not enough?

XIX

Love is a game — yes?
I think it is a drowning:
Black willows and stars.

XX

When the aster fades
The creeper flaunts in crimson,
Always another!

XXI

Turning from the page,
Blind with a night of labour,
I hear morning crows.

XXII

A cloud of lilies,
Or else you walk before me.
Who could see clearly?

XXIII

Sweet smell of wet flowers
Over an evening garden.
Your portrait, perhaps?

XXIV

Staying in my room,
I thought of the new Spring leaves.
That day was happy.

THE ANNIVERSARY

Ten years is nothing,
Yet I do not remember
What happened before.

Morning flings shadows,
But midday is shadowless.
So I have found it.

I have no flowers,
Yet I give you these roses.
Himour my pretence.

Have I satisfied?
Who can be sure of himself.
Touch me with your love.

Knowing my weakness,
Spread your hands above my head.
See only your hands.

Watching you daily,
I dare not think what I see.
It is better so.

Since I am only
What you may consider me,
Have merciful thoughts.

Shield me from myself.
At times I have wounded you.
I do not forget.

Take what I give you.
Foolishness is in my words,
But not in my heart.

Cease urging your ears,
My speech has little for them.
Hearken otherwise.

You wrong me, saying:
One death will not kill us both.
Your veins hold my sap.

Keep in remembrance:
Peonies do not blossom
Till Spring is over.

You prefer Spring? Why?
A season's length of hours —
Incalculable.

Days and days — what then?
Is not recurrence a smile
On the face of age?

Now, in the pale dawn,
How strange to consider time.
What is it to us?

Grains of rice counted —
Can any one so spend life?
Be spacious and wise.

The bowl is still full.
We will not be niggardly.
Plunge in both your hands.

I have known terror.
I swear to know it no more,
Each day a new dawn.

Youth is incautious.
Wisdom learns to tread softly,
Valuing moments.

Cherishing what is,
The wise man sees it depart
Without emotion.

Time is rhetoric,
A mad logician's plaything.
O pitiful world!

Listen to the wind;
Man has not learnt to measure
The wind of his thought.

Blowing asunder,
Yet we shall be as the air
Still undivided.

Sleep until day-spring.
With morning we start again,
Another ten years.

SONG FOR A VIOLA D'AMORE

The lady of my choice is bright
As a clematis at the touch of night,
As a white clematis with a purple heart
When twilight cuts earth and sun apart.
Through the dusking garden I hear her
voice
As a smooth, sweet, wandering, windy
noise,
And I see her stand as a ghost may do

In answer to a rendez-vous
Long sought with agony and prayer.
So watching her, I see her there.

I sit beneath a quiet tree
And watch her everlastingly.
The garden may or may not be
Before my eyes, I cannot see.
But darkness drifting up and down
Divides to let her silken gown
Glean there beside the clematis.
How marvellously white it is!
Five white blossoms and she are there
Like candles in a fluttering air
Escaping from a tower stair.

*Be still you cursed, rattling leaf,
This is no time to think of grief.*

The night is soft, and fire-flies
Are very casual, gay, and wise,
And they have made a tiny glee
Just where the clematis and she
Are standing. Since the sky is clear,
Do they suppose that, once a year,
The moon and five white stars appear
Walking the earth; that, so attended,
Diana came and condescended
To hold speech with Endymion
Before she came at last alone.

The lady of my choice is bright
As a clematis at the fall of night.
Her voice is honeysuckle sweet,
Her presence spreads an April heat
Before the going of her feet.
She is of perfectness complete.
The lady whom my heart perceives
As a clematis above its leaves,
As a purple-hearted clematis.
And what is lovelier than that is?

PRIME

Your voice is like bells over roofs at dawn
When a bird flies
And the sky changes to a fresher colour.

Speak, speak, Beloved.
Say little things
For my ears to catch
And run with them to my heart.

VESPERS

Last night, at sunset,
The foxgloves were like tall altar candles.

Could I have lifted you to the roof of
the greenhouse, my Dear,
I should have understood their burning.

IN EXCELSIS

You — you —
Your shadow is sunlight on a plate of
silver;
Your footsteps, the seeding-place of lilies;
Your hands moving, a chime of bells
across a windless air.

The movement of your hands is the long,
golden running of light from a rising
sun;
It is the hopping of birds upon a garden-
path.

As the perfume of jonquils, you come
forth in the morning.
Young horses are not more sudden than
your thoughts,
Your words are bees about a pear-tree,
Your fancies are the gold-and-black striped
wasps buzzing among red apples.
I drink your lips,
I eat the whiteness of your hands and
feet.

My mouth is open,
As a new jar I am empty and open.
Like white water are you who fill the
cup of my mouth,
Like a brook of water thronged with
lilies.

You are frozen as the clouds,
You are far and sweet as the high clouds.
I dare reach to you,
I dare touch the rim of your brightness.
I leap beyond the winds,
I cry and shout,
For my throat is keen as a sword
Sharpened on a hone of ivory.
My throat sings the joy of my eyes,
The rushing gladness of my love.

How has the rainbow fallen upon my
heart?
How have I snared the seas to lie in my
fingers
And caught the sky to be a cover for my
head?
How have you come to dwell with me,

Compassing me with the four circles of
your mystic lightness,
So that I say "Glory! Glory!" and how
before you
As to a shrine?

Do I tease myself that morning is morning
and a day after?

Do I think the air a condescension,
The earth a politeness,
Heaven a boon deserving thanks?
So you — air — earth — heaven —
I do not thank you,
I take you,
I live.

And those things which I say in consequence
Are rubies mortised in a gate of stone.

WHITE CURRANTS

Shall I give you white currants?
I do not know why, but I have a sudden
fancy for this fruit.

At the moment, the idea of them
cherishes my senses,
And they seem more desirable than flawless emeralds.

Since I am, in fact, empty-handed,
I might have chosen gems out of India,
But I choose white currants.

Is it because the raucous wind is hurtling
round the house-corners?

I see it with curled lips and stripped
fangs, gaunt with a hunting
energy,

Come to snout, and nibble, and kill the
little crocus roots.

Shall we call it white currants?

You may consider it as a symbol if you
please.

You may find them tart, or sweet, or
merely agreeable in colour,

So long as you accept them,

And me.

EXERCISE IN LOGIC

I gave you a picture once,

A great crimson sun floating beside a
gnarled bamboo.

The sun has faded;

For which reason, I think nothing of the
painter,

Until I reflect that many pigments cannot
bear the dazzle of excessive light.
For, my Dear, have you not sat opposite
it daily?

I ask you, is there truth in this?

OVERCAST SUNRISE

The sky is spattered with clouds,
Pink clouds,
And behind them is the reluctant blue
of dawn.

The hemlock-trees move to a weary wind,
And the clouds lose their brightness,
Gathering to a dull day.

Morning, you observe —

But the night was more shining in my
thoughts.

O realistic generation,

Who do not get abroad while still the
clouds are pink

And the sky concerned only with how
much colour it will choose to wear!

AFTERGLOW

Peonies

The strange pink colour of Chinese porcelain;

Wonderful — the glow of them.

But, my Dear, it is the pale blue larkspur

Which swings windily against my heart.
Other Summers —

And a cricket chirping in the grass.

A DIMENSION

To-night I stood among roses

Watching the slow studding of the sky
with stars.

The cat fawned upon me to play with
him.

Poor little cat, you have only me,
Unless we add that delightful feather on
the end of a whip.

I have flowers and the high green liveliness
of an evening sky.

And I find them not worth your feather,
Since the earth happens to be round as
an orange

And I am not possessed of seven league
boots.

MACKEREL SKY

I ride, ride,
 Through the spotted sunlight of an April
 forest
 Down a pathway bewildered with crocus
 cups,
 The wind dallies with the plume of my
 helmet.
 I ride, ride,
 Seeking those adventures to which I am
 dedicate,
 Determined, but without alertness,
 Ungraciously ignoring the salutations of
 the young, jocund leaves.

Lady,
 Far as you are from me in distance of
 place,
 I know you yet farther off in good will
 of heart.
 Wherefore,
 Although I make a brave show in armour
 of green and carnation
 Riveted with the flowers which are
 called "you-love-me-not" of white and
 yellow,
 And on my shield a waning moon in a
 field of azure,
 I am gayer in my colours than in my
 heart.

THE ON-LOOKER

Suppose I plant you
 Like wide-eyed Helen
 On the battlements
 Of weary Troy,
 Clutching the parapet with desperate
 hands.
 She, too, gazes at a battle-field
 Where bright vermilion plumes and
 metal whiteness
 Shock and sparkle and go down with
 groans.
 Her glances strike the rocking battle,
 Again — again —
 Recoiling from it
 Like baffled spear-heads fallen from a
 brazen shield.
 The ancients at her elbow counsel pa-
 tience and contingencies;
 Such to a woman stretched upon a bed
 of battle,

Who bargained for this only in the
 whispering arras
 Enclosed about a midnight of enchant-
 ment.

LILACS

Lilacs,
 False blue,
 White,
 Purple,
 Colour of lilac,
 Your great puffs of flowers
 Are everywhere in this my New England.
 Among your heart-shaped leaves
 Orange orioles hop like music-box birds
 and sing
 Their little weak soft songs;
 In the crooks of your branches
 The bright eyes of song sparrows sitting
 on spotted eggs
 Peer restlessly through the light and
 shadow
 Of all Springs.
 Lilacs in dooryards
 Holding quiet conversations with an
 early moon;
 Lilacs watching a deserted house
 Settling sideways into the grass of an
 old road;
 Lilacs, wind-beaten, staggering under a
 lopsided shock of bloom
 Above a cellar dug into a hill.
 You are everywhere.
 You were everywhere.
 You tapped the window when the preacher
 preached his sermon,
 And ran along the road beside the boy
 going to school.
 You stood by pasture-bars to give the
 cows good milking,
 You persuaded the housewife that her
 dish pan was of silver.
 And her husband an image of pure gold.
 You flaunted the fragrance of your blos-
 soms
 Through the wide doors of Custom
 Houses —
 You, and sandal-wood, and tea,
 Charging the noses of quill-driving clerks
 When a ship was in from China.
 You called to them: "Goose-quill men,
 goose-quill men,
 May is a month for flitting."
 Until they writhed on their high stools

And wrote poetry on their letter-sheets
 behind the propped-up ledgers.
 Paradoxical New England clerks,
 Writing inventories in ledgers, reading
 the "Song of Solomon" at night,
 So many verses before bed-time,
 Because it was the Bible.
 The dead fed you
 Amid the slant stones of graveyards.
 Pale ghosts who planted you
 Came in the night-time
 And let their thin hair blow through your
 clustered stems.
 You are of the green sea,
 And of the stone hills which reach a long
 distance.
 You are of elm-shaded streets with little
 shops where they sell kites and marbles,
 You are of great parks where everyone
 walks and nobody is at home.
 You cover the blind sides of greenhouses
 And lean over the top to say a hurry-
 word through the glass
 To your friends, the grapes, inside.

Lilacs,
 False blue,
 White,
 Purple,
 Colour of lilac,
 You have forgotten your Eastern origin,
 The veiled women with eyes like pan-
 thers,
 The swollen, aggressive turbans of jewelled
 Pashas.
 Now you are a very decent flower,
 A reticent flower,
 A curiously clear-cut, candid flower,
 Standing beside clean doorways,
 Friendly to a house-cat and a pair of
 spectacles,
 Making poetry out of a bit of moonlight
 And a hundred or two sharp blossoms.

Maine knows you,
 Has for years and years;
 New Hampshire knows you,
 And Massachusetts
 And Vermont.
 Cape Cod starts you along the beaches
 to Rhode Island;
 Connecticut takes you from a river to
 the sea.
 You are brighter than apples,
 Sweeter than tulips,

You are the great flood of our souls
 Bursting above the leaf-shapes of our
 hearts,
 You are the smell of all Summers,
 The love of wives and children,
 The recollection of the gardens of little
 children,
 You are State Houses and Charters
 And the familiar treading of the foot to
 and fro on a road it knows.
 May is lilac here in New England,
 May is a thrush singing "Sun up!" on a
 tip-top ash-tree,
 May is white clouds behind pine-trees
 Puffed out and marching upon a blue
 sky.
 May is a green as no other,
 May is much sun through small leaves,
 May is soft earth,
 And apple-blossoms,
 And windows open to a South wind.
 May is full light wind of lilac
 From Canada to Narragansett Bay.

Lilacs,
 False blue,
 White,
 Purple,
 Colour of lilac.
 Heart-leaves of lilac all over New Eng-
 land,
 Roots of lilac under all the soil of New
 England,
 Lilac in me because I am New England,
 Because my roots are in it,
 Because my leaves are of it,
 Because my flowers are for it,
 Because it is my country
 And I speak to it of itself
 And sing of it with my own voice
 Since certainly it is mine.

PURPLE GRACKLES

The grackles have come.
 The smoothness of the morning is
 puckered with their incessant chatter.
 A sociable lot, these purple grackles,
 Thousands of them strung across a long
 run of wind,
 Thousands of them beating the air-ways
 with quick wing-jerks,
 Spinning down the currents of the South.
 Every year they come,

My garden is a place of solace and recreation evidently,
For they always pass a day with me.
With high good nature they tell me what
I do not want to hear.
The grackles have come.

I am persuaded that grackles are birds;
But when they are settled in the trees,
I am inclined to declare them fruits
And the trees turned hybrid blackberry vines.

Blackness shining and bulging under leaves,
Does not that mean blackberries, I ask you?

Nonsense! The grackles have come.

Nonchalant highwaymen, pickpockets, second-story burglars,
Stealing away my little hope of Summer.
There is no stealthy robbing in this.
Who ever heard such a gabble of thieves' talk!

It seems they delight in unmasking my poor pretence.

Yes, now I see that the hydrangea blooms are rusty;

That the hearts of the golden glow are ripening to lustreless seeds;

That the garden is dahlia-coloured,
Flaming with its last over-hot hues;

That the sun is pale as a lemon too small
to fill the picking-ring.

I did not see this yesterday,

But to-day the grackles have come.

They drop out of the trees

And strut in companies over the lawn,
Tired of flying, no doubt;

A grand parade to limber legs and give wings a rest.

I should build a great fish-pond for them,
Since it is evident that a bird-bath, meant
to accommodate two goldfinches at most,

Is slight hospitality for these hordes.

Scarcely one can get in,

They all peck and scramble so,

Crowding, pushing, chasing one another
up the bank with spread wings.

"Are we ducks, you, owner of such
inadequate comforts,

That you offer us lily-tanks where one
must swim or drown,

Not stand and splash like a gentleman?"
I feel the reproach keenly, seeing them
perch on the edges of the tanks, trying
the depth with a chary foot,

And hardly able to get their wings under
water in the bird-bath.

But there are resources I had not considered,

If I am bravely ruled out of count.

What is that thudding against the eaves
just beyond my window?

What is that spray of water blowing past
my face?

Two — three — grackles bathing in the gutter,

The gutter providentially choked with leaves.

I pray they think I put the leaves there
on purpose;

I would be supposed thoughtful and welcoming

To all guests, even thieves.

But considering that they are going South
and I am not,

I wish they would bathe more quietly,
It is unmannerly to flaunt one's good fortune.

They rate me of no consequence,

But they might reflect that it is my gutter.
I know their opinion of me,

Because one is drying himself on the window-sill

Not two feet from my hand.

His purple neck is sleek with water,

And the fellow preens his feathers for all
the world as if I were a fountain statue.

If it were not for the window,

I am convinced he would light on my head.

Tyrian-feathered freebooter,

Appropriating my delightful gutter with
so extravagant an ease,

You are as cool a pirate as ever scuttled
a ship,

And are you not scuttling my Summer
with every peck of your sharp bill?

But there is a cloud over the beech-tree,
A quenching cloud for lemon-livered suns.

The grackles are all swinging in the tree-tops,

And the wind is coming up, mind you.
That boom and reach is no Summer gale,

I know that wind,
 It blows the Equinox over seeds and
 scatters them,
 It rips petals from petals, and tears off
 half-turned leaves.
 There is rain on the back of that wind.
 Now I would keep the grackles,
 I would plead with them not to leave me.
 I grant their coming, but I would not
 have them go.
 It is a milestone, this passing of grackles.
 A day of them, and it is a year gone by.
 There is magic in this and terror,
 But I only stare stupidly out of the
 window.
 The grackles have come.

Come! Yes, they surgly came.
 But they have gone.
 A moment ago the oak was full of them,
 They are not there now.
 Not a speck of a black wing,
 Not an eye-peep of a purple head.
 The grackles have gone.
 And I watch an Autumn storm
Stripping the garden.
 Shouting black rain challenges
 To an old, limp Summer
 Laid down to die in the flower-beds.

MEETING-HOUSE HILL

I must be mad, or very tired,
 When the curve of a blue bay beyond a
 railroad track
 Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden
 springing of a tune,
 And the sight of a white church above
 thin trees in a city square
 Amazes my eyes as though it were the
 Parthenon.
 Clear, reticent, superbly final,
 With the pillars of its portico refined to
 a cautious elegance,
 It dominates the weak trees,
 And the shot of its spire
 Is cool, and candid,
 Rising into an unresisting sky.
 Strange meeting-house
 Pausing a moment upon a squalid hill-
 top.
 I watch the spire sweeping the sky,
 I am dizzy with the movement of the
 sky,
 I might be watching a mast

With its royals set full
 Straining before a two-reef breeze.
 I might be sighting a tea-clipper,
 Tacking into the blue bay,
 Just back from Canton
 With her hold full of green and blue
 porcelain,
 And a Chinese coolie leaning over the
 rail
 Gazing at the white spire
 With dull, sea-spent eyes.

TEXAS

I went a-riding, a-riding,
 Over a great long plain.
 And the plain went a-sliding, a-sliding
 Away from my bridle-rein.

Fields of cotton, and fields of wheat,
 Thunder-blue gentians by a wire fence,
 Standing cypress, red and tense,
 Holding its flower rigid like a gun,
 Dressed for parade by the running wheat,
 By the little bouncing cotton. Terribly
 sweet
 The cardinals sing in the live-oak trees,
 And the long plain breeze,
 The prairie breeze,
 Blows across from swell to swell
 With a ginger swell.
 Just ahead, where the road curves round,
 A long-eared rabbit makes a bound
 Into a wheat-field, into a cotton-field.
 His track glitters after him and goes still
 again
 Over to the left of my bridle-rein.

But over to the right is a glare — glare —
 glare —
 Of sharp glass windows.
 A narrow square of brick jerks thickly up
 above the cotton plants,
 A raucous mercantile thing flaring the
 sun from thirty-six windows,
 Brazenly declaring itself to the lovely
 fields.
 Tram-cars run like worms about the feet
 of this thing,
 The coffins of cotton-bales feed it,
 The threshed wheat is its golden blood.
 But here it has no feet,
 It has only the steep ironic grin of its
 thirty-six windows,

Only its basilisk eyes counting the fields,
Doing sums of how many buildings to a
city, all day and all night.

Once they went a-riding, a-riding,
Over the great long plain.
Cowboys singing to their dogey steers,
Cowboys perched on forty-dollar saddles,
Riding to the North, six months to get
there,
Six months to reach Wyoming.
"Hoid up, paint horse, herd the little
dogies,
Over the lone prairie."
Bones of dead steers,
Bones of cowboys,
Under the wheat, maybe.

The sky-scraper sings another way,
A tune of steel, of wheels, of gold.
And the ginger breeze blows, blows all
day
Tangled with flowers and mold.
And the Texas sky whirls down, whirls
down,
Taking long looks at the fussy town.
An old sky and a long plain
Beyond, beyond, my bridle-rein.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Fifteen years is not a long time,
But long enough to build a city over and
destroy it.
Long enough to clean a forty-year growth
of grass from between cobblestones,
And run street-car lines straight across
the heart of romance.
Commerce, are you worth this?
I should like to bring a case to trial:
Prosperity versus Beauty,
Cash registers tectering in a balance
against the comfort of the soul.
Then, to-night, I stood looking through a
grilled gate
At an old, dark garden.
Live-oak trees dripped branchfuls of
leaves over the wall,
Acacias waved dimly beyond the gate,
and the smell of their blossoms
Puffed intermittently through the wrought-
iron scroll-work.
Challenge and solution —

O loveliness of old, decaying, haunted
things!

Little streets untouched, shamefully paved,
Full of mist and fragrance on this rainy
evening.

"You should come at dawn," said my
friend,

"And see the orioles, and thrushes, and
mocking-birds

In the garden."

"Yes," I said absent-mindedly,

And remarked the sharp touch of ivy
upon my hand which rested against
the wall.

But I thought to myself,

There is no dawn here, only sunset,
And an evening rain scented with flowers.

THE MIDDLETON PLACE CHARLESTON, S.C.

What would Francis Jammes, lover of
dear, dead elegancies,
Say to this place?

France, stately, formal, stepping in red-
heeled shoes

Along a river shore.

France walking a minuet between live-
oaks waving ghostly fans of Spanish
moss.

La Caroline, indeed, my dear Jammes,
With Monsieur Michaux engaged to
teach her deportment.

Faint as a whiff of flutes and hautbois,
The great circle of the approach lies be-
neath the sweeping grasses.

Step lightly down these terraces, they are
records of a dream.

Magnolias, pyrus japonicas, azaleas,
Flaunting their scattered blooms with the
same bravura

That lords and ladies used in the prison
of the Conciergerie.

You were meant to be so gay, so sophis-
ticated, and you are so sad,

Sad as the tomb crouched amid your
tangled growth,

Sad as the pale plumes of the Spanish
moss

Slowly strangling the live-oak trees.

Sunset wanes along the quiet river.

The afterglow is haunted and nostalgic,

Over the yellow woodland it hangs like
the dying chord of a funeral chant;
And evenly, satirically, the mosses move
to its ineffable rhythm,
Like the ostrich fans of palsied dowagers
Telling one another contentedly of the
deaths they have lived to see.

THE VOW

Tread softly, softly,
Scuffle no dust.
No common thoughts shall thrust
Upon this peaceful decay,
This mold and rust of yesterday.
This is an altar with its incense blown
away
By the indifferent wind of a long, sad
night;
These are the precincts of the dead who
die
Unconquered. Haply
You who haunt this place
May deign some gesture of forgiveness
To those of our Sundered race
Who come in all humility
Asking an alms of pardon.
Suffer us to feel an ease,
A benefice of love poured down on us
from these magnolia-trees.
That, when we leave you, we shall know
the bitter wound
Of our long mutual scourging healed at
last and sound.

Through an iron gate, fantastically
scrolled and garlanded,
Along a path, green with moss, between
two rows of high magnolia-trees —
*How lightly the wind drips through
the magnolias.*
*How slightly the magnolia bend to the
wind.*

It stands, pushed back into a corner of
the piazza,
A jouncing-board, with its paint scaled
off,
A jouncing-board which creaks when you
sit upon it.
*The wind rattles the stiff leaves of the
magnolias:*
*So may tinkling banjos drown the
weeping of women.*

When the Yankees came like a tide of
locusts,
When blue uniforms blocked the ends of
streets
And foolish, arrogant swords struck
through the paintings of a hundred
years.
*From gold and ivory coasts come the
winds that jingle in the tree-tops;*
*But the sigh of the wind in the un-
shaven grass, from whence is that?*

Proud hearts who could not endure dese-
cration,
Who almost bathed the sky because it
was blue;
Vengeful spirits, locked in young, arro-
gant bodies,
You cursed yourselves with a vow;
Never would you set foot again in
Charleston streets,
Never leave your piazza till Carolina was
rid of Yankees.
O smooth wind sliding in from the sea,
It is a matter of no moment to you
what flag you are flapping.

Ocean tides, morning and evening, slip-
ping past the sea-islands;
Tides slipping in through the harbour,
shaking the palmetto posts,
Slipping out through the harbour;
Pendulum tides, counting themselves
upon the sea-islands.

So they jounced, for health's sake,
To be well and able to rejoice when once
again the city was free,
And the lost cause won, and the stars
and bars afloat over Sumter.
The days which had roared to them
called more softly,
The days whispered, the days were silent,
they moved as imperceptibly as mist.

And the proud hearts went with the days,
into the dusk of age, the darkness
of death.
Slowly they were borne away through a
Charleston they scarcely remem-
bered.
The jouncing-board was pushed into a
corner,
Only the magnolia-trees tossed a petal to
it, now and again, if there hap-

pened to be a strong wind when the
blooms were dropping.

Hush, go gently,
Do not move a pebble with your foot.
This is a moment of pause,
A moment to recollect the futility of
cause.

A moment to bow the head
And greet the unconcerned dead,
Denying nothing of their indifference,
And then go hence
And forget them again,
Since lives are lived with living men.

THE CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY

The earth is a coloured thing.
See the red clays, and the umbers and salt
greys of the mountains;
See the clustered and wandering greens
of plains and hillsides,
The leaf-greens, bush-greens, water-plant
and snow-greens
Of gardens and forests.
See the reds of flowers — hibiscus, poppy,
geranium;
The rose-red of little flowers — may-
flowers, primroses;
The harlequin shades of sweet-peas,
orchids, pansies;
The madders, saffrons, chromes, of still
waters,
The silver and star-blues, the wine-blues
of seas and oceans.
Observe the stars at night time, name
the colour of them;
Count and recount the hues of clouds at
sunset and at dawn.
And the colours of the races of men —
What are they?
And what are we?
We, the people without a race,
Without a language;
Of all races, and of none;
Of all tongues, and one imposed;
Of all traditions and all pasts,
With no tradition and no past.
A patchwork and an altar-piece,
Vague as sea-mist,
Myriad as forest-trees,
Living into a present,
Building a future.
Our colour is the vari-coloured world.
No colours clash,

All clash and change,
And, in changing, new colours come and
go and dominate and remain,
And no one shall say which remain,
Since those that have vanished return,
And those no man has seen take the light
and are.

Where else in all America are we so
symbolized
As in this hall?
White columns polished like glass,
A dome and a dome,
A balcony and a balcony,
Stairs and the balustrades to them,
Yellow marble and red slabs of it,
All mounting, spearing, flying into colour.
Colour round the dome and up to it,
Colour curving, kite-flying, to the second
dome,
Light, dropping, pitching down upon the
colour,
Arrow-falling upon the glass-bright pillars,
Mingled colours spinning into a shape of
white pillars,
Fusing, cooling, into balanced shafts of
shrill and interthronging light.
This is America,
This vast, confused beauty,
This staring, restless speed of loveliness,
Mighty, overwhelming, crude, of all
forms,
Making grandeur out of profusion,
Afraid of no incongruities,
Sublime in its audacity,
Bizarre breaker of moulds,
Laughing with strength,
Charging down on the past,
Glorious and conquering,
Destroyer, builder,
Invincible pith and marrow of the world,
An old world remaking,
Whirling into the no-world of all-col-
oured light.

But behind the vari-coloured hall?
The entrails, the belly,
The blood-run veins, the heart and vis-
cera,
What of these?
Only at night do they speak,
Only at night do the voices rouse them-
selves and speak.
There are words in the veins of this
creature,

There are still notes singing in its breast:
Silent voices, whispering what it shall
speak,

Frozen music beating upon its pulses.
These are the voices of the furious dead
who never die,
Furious with love and life, unquenchable,
Dictating their creeds across the vapours
of time.

This is the music of the Trumpeters of
the Almighty
Weeping for a lost estate,
Sounding to a new birth which is to-
morrow.

Hark! This hurricane of music has no
end,

The speech of these voices has neither
end nor beginning;

They are inter-riven as the colours of the
sky

Over the graveyards of ten thousand gen-
erations.

When we are as Nineveh, our white col-
umns thrown and scattered,
Our dome of colours striped with the
crawling of insects,
Spotted with the thrust of damp clay—
Our words, our music, who will build a
dome to hive them?

In whose belly shall we come to life?

A new life,
Beyond submergence and destruction,
The implacable life of silent words,
Of tumultuous stillness of never-ceasing
music.

Lost to being that so it may triumph
And become the blood and heat and urge
Of that hidden distance which forever
whips and harries the static present
Of mankind.

WHICH, BEING INTERPRETED, IS AS MAY BE, OR OTHERWISE

Underneath the dim, criss-crossing beams
Crown edgeless with the litter of decay,
Where spiders hung their everlasting
webs

To wave, tier upon tier, across the gloom
Whenever any little cranny wind
Whined in on them and tumbled up the
dust

Upon the flaking beams and on the floor

Startling the nosing rats to sudden cold.
Old Neron sat, cuddling his withered
bones.

Above his head, the great Cathedral bells
Scattered their hallelujahs round the sky
On Sundays, holy days, and festivals;
But Neron took no note of them, his ears
Were inadvertent to such happenings
As cry themselves with bells. He sat un-
moved,

Scuffing his naked feet in the thick dust
Poured from the mouldering beams by
the bells' jar,

Sorting his pleasure from old heaps of
thoughts.

Below his garret, stairs and stairs below,
Men skinned their fingers tugging at the
ropes

That swung the clappers of the chiming
bells.

No kith nor kin to Neron, these; his
bones

Were liker to the shafts and traceries
And gargoyled gutters shining on the
town

In twitched and twisted angles. Neron
paid

No least attention to them, nor the
church

Which harboured him; and yet it was a
jewel,

A very rose of Gothic merriment.

Blooming symbolic beasts on every arch
And sprouting columns like a Summer
wood.

All up and down were flights of spiral
stairs,

Contrived within the hollow core of
walls,

Leading to chambers of hewn stone, and
lofts

Where slits for windows pierced the
granite blocks

More than an arm's length to reach open
air,

And distant so far down that sums of
steps

Ran into figures to affright the mind,
God lived upon an altar bright with
lights

Where snivelling priests might wish him
well-a-day.

Now Neron was a man preoccupied
With the huge spectacle of impotence

Swarming upon an ether-floating planet

Which only people called astronomers
 Paused to take any heed of. Other men
 Hurried and worried over this and that,
 And passed from birth to death in one
 short eye-wink

Of aching agitation. Fools, parlous fools,
 To aged Neron, but a stupendous jest
 Fit for the crumpling of old bones in
 laughter.

Sneering was a capable sort of sport
 If one had learnt the trick of balancing
 On an impalpable circumference
 To whirl a quite detached and sharpened
 vision

Over inanities a decent planet
 Might be ashamed to carry. Neron took
 His younger self as motto; every phase
 Which others linger in had once been
 his,

But in the end he had flung clear of
 all.

They served him in the way of illustration.

He built them up like blocks to knock
 them down

And chuckle at the noise they made in
 falling.

These visions of himself were warlock
 dreams

Conjured up with a wand-stroke from the
 air

And swept away as easily upon
 The imperious order of another gesture.
 This pastime lifted Neron to a god,
 Or something similar, if only language
 Had found a word for it. But superstition
 Held words too rigid in a certain groove
 For any purpose Neron had for them;
 Giving a thing no name exacts obedience
 To any chasing colour or humour one
 May need to clap to it, and he, at least,
 Swam high above convention in his
 thoughts.

Under the criss-cross beams and chiming
 bells

Old Neron sat, cheating himself with
 dreams,

Spreading them out before him, one by
 one,

As dowagers tap down their playing cards
 With claw-like hands in games of soli-
 taire.

His frozen eyes gleamed at them as they
 came

Out of the darkness from an eldritch past

Which seemed no longer his, yet tasted
 sweet

In far-off recollection. Childhood first —
 But what was childhood? A small, fragile
 thing

Of gay mishaps, and silly, bootless joys,
 An eagerness of folly over tops,
 Or kites which tugged and sharply broke
 their strings

Leaving a heartache Neron chirped to
 think

No greatest misery could give him now.
 Youth bettered this. His jellied blood
 became

Less solid pondering upon the heat
 Which burns youth into powder; his old
 bones

Were brittle, maybe, but not to that fire,
 And yet its simulacrum was most fit
 To muse upon and glow vicariously,
 Warming safe fingers at a painted flame.
 And Neron felt a queasy sort of pride
 In mocking his old wounds with jibes
 that pricked

To a delicious flood of memory.

The hurt outgrown was tonic to his years.
 He plied his ridicule so lustily

His body shook and rattled where he sat.
 But manhood, flattering itself with windy
 praise,

Hugging the spiky guerdon of a name
 With letters to it, gratified beyond
 Desire by the cheap grace of epithet —
 What monument of satire was this!
 What exquisite lampooning! — O, the
 mirth

Of stars and ribbons viewed from the
 vast height

Of Neron's imperturbability!

To clasp a quondam purpose to a grin
 Was sport to make him hug his pointed
 knees

And rock for very glee, until his thighs
 Were bruised with teetering upon the
 floor

Whose only cushion was the heaped-up
 dust.

How good to lick the sauce from all those
 years

And leave them icy bare and shivering,
 With no illusion for their nakedness,
 Turned playthings for a man of doting
 age

Who had no other joy but these, and
 sleep.

A little sift of daylight wandered in
 Where one of the roof-tiles had blown
 away
 And rain and sun had rotted through the
 wood.
 This wisp of light was company to Neron.
 He watched the floor-boards change from
 dark to glare,
 Saw the glow creep upon a cock of dust
 And leave it flat in shadow, traced its
 course
 To where the hole's edge snapped it
 swiftly off,
 Striking him blind to the accustomed
 dusk.
 Now Neron had a friend he never met,
 A verger who winked at his being there
 In the sky-loft where no one ever came,
 And left him scraps of broken meat and
 bread
 Upon a step of the third stairway down.
 The light was Neron's clock; it lit a crack
 jagged and strange, not like another
 crack,
 So Neron knew the time. With many a
 curse
 And groan he twitched his shaking bones
 upright
 And tottered down the stair to get his
 meat,
 For he must eat to live and dream his
 dreams.
 He hated it, the aching journey down
 And up again, he hated even his bones
 Whose insolence in so demanding food
 Sent him to get it whatever cost
 To old, unable feet and quaking knees;
 He loathed the verger's charitable dole,
 The need of it became an injury.
 But Neron still must eat, and so he went
 Wearily down the stair to get his food.
 It was not easy eating with the rats
 Swarming upon him, but Neron long
 ago
 Had crawled about his loft and gathered
 in
 Such bits of bars, and bolts, and wooden
 blocks
 As workmen leave, and sitting there he
 shied
 These craftily into the horde of rats
 And kept them from him while he eat his
 meat.
 And afterwards, filled for more cursing,
 he

Would fumble round and pick his
 weapons up,
 Treasuring them with canny, careful
 count
 Lest one among the number might be
 missed,
 To serve him for another meal to-mor-
 row.
 So the days went, one pea-like to another,
 The seasons unremarked, the years a loss.
 No Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday were,
 for Neron,
 Just when the light was there and when
 'twas not,
 With dreams and slumber as each chose
 to come—
 This, he would think, was sure philos-
 ophy,
 Proper to please the minds of dry old
 men
 Outgrown of creeds and fallals, seeing far
 Beyond the hazards itching younger folk
 With livelier arteries, whose dumb-bell
 heads
 Were crowned with donkey's ears. Old
 bones are wise
 And undisturbed by any hum of flesh;
 He knew this with a wizened irony.
 Weighing the world and life against his
 bones,
 He tipped the scales down heavily, he
 thought,
 And so was satisfied. His cackling laugh
 Piped to the rats and hanging spiders'
 webs
 And smothered in the muffle of decay.
 The wine of his conceit was very old
 And heady; like a drug, it ran beneath
 His skin and flushed his veins so that
 they stood
 Out on him like blue worms. A queer
 old man,
 Building content with each new creaking
 thought
 That jarred across his draughty, shrivelled
 brain.
 One day as he was groping in the dusk,
 The dusty dusk through which the light-
 streak clove
 And showed it such for some few broom-
 stick lengths,
 His startled fingers closed about a foot,
 Two feet, in fact, a pair of human feet,
 Palpable to his touch, but cold as snow.

Old Neron cringed from them and hid
 his eyes.
 For might he not be going mad? Yes,
 mad!
 That last cold horror haunting vacant
 age?
 His toothless jaws chattered and slab-
 bered now
 For one pale moment, then he looked
 and saw
 Two wooden statues in the golden dusk:
 A king with orb and sceptre, and a beard
 As black as ink, beside him was his
 queen,
 And both were crowned. The beard held
 Neron's eyes.
 Waist-long and vast, its heaviness of hair
 Stamped the king's sullen masculinity
 With something of grave terror. Neron
 felt
 An instant loathing, tingled with shrewd
 fear;
 And yet, although he shuddered, a sly
 spark
 Of admiration twinged him like a pain.
 This was a terrible and virile king.
 But for the queen — old Neron gasped
 before
 Her sudden loveliness. A slender plant
 Swung in a wind, crowned by a pyramid
 Of fragile, jostling bells, was not more
 like
 Itself than she to it. Her eyes were kind,
 But wise withal, and hooded with fatigue.
 She drooped in standing, yet remained
 upright
 Wistfully conscious of an effort so.
 Her pleated robe of green, or blue, or
 green,
 Pushed out or hollowed as her body
 pressed
 Upon it or withdrew within its folds;
 She stood as naked to old Neron's eyes
 As though no robe were there. Her small
 white hands
 Held a red fox-glove, charming in its
 poise;
 Her feet, which caught the sliding spray
 of light,
 Appeared to tread on gold. Neron beheld
 Them, bitter bearded king, mighty in
 power,
 And gentle queen all weariful repose.
 The light moved on and Neron saw no
 more.

Who were they? Neron plagued his
 memory
 For some stray fact he might have heard
 of them.
 But nothing came. He probed a curious
 mind
 Into the reason for their banishment
 To this lost corner whence no one had
 climbed
 For desert lengths of years; he did not
 know
 How long he had himself been there,
 death-long
 He thought, and tallied up his distant
 dreams
 As glittering from the other side of life.
 Day after day he pondered why so late
 He had encountered them. His wisp of
 light
 Fell always to a line; but this was fact
 Which baffled speculation. His own
 dreams
 Fogged to a hueless essence, here was
 more
 To work upon; with such a king and
 queen
 Things had moved gaudily — if that were
 all.
 He guessed the word ill-chosen, half a
 truth,
 And seeking the other half, he wrought
 them both
 Into a tale of tragic circumstance,
 Of bargained marriage hurried on
 through lust,
 Of desolate surrender where no hope
 Of moving iron wills could have a place,
 Of girlhood torn upon the state of queen.
 With scraps of ancient myths, and fairy-
 tales,
 And half-remembered tags of history,
 Neron made up a story his old dreams
 Could nowise counter with. He let them
 be,
 Forsaking his life to consider theirs:
 The terrible and unrelenting king,
 The queen with a red fox-glove in her
 hands.
 So Neron changed the order of his
 dreams
 And irony became magnificence.
 The queen, composed and cool, bent to
 his will,
 Moving with stately graciousness within
 The frame of his imaginings. She fringed

His dream with filigrees of excellence,
A lace of buds and scarcely opened
flowers

Just touched with morning hoar-frost.
But the king

Had his own dreams and would not enter
Neron's,

Black dreams peculiar to a bearded king.
They injured Neron in his own esteem,
Chafing him to achieve a greater thing
Than he had yet conceived. His ardour
grew

To match himself against the king, and
crack

The shell of high omnipotence in two
And gloat upon the scattered empty
halves

Lolling lopsided on the dusty floor.
So gradually he wrought a miracle,
Merging himself into the royal dream —
But not as ancient Neron, that old man
Had plumped himself with visions of the
queen

Into a proper youth whose sap ran hot
Over his gusty body, ripe for love,
Fresh with the bursting agony of love,
And she a very distant, youthful queen.
As long as he could see them, Neron sat
Before the statues, while the light-streak
crawled

From king to queen and left them in the
dark.

Bit after bit he added to his dream.
He found the castle where they lived,
above

A meadow of fair trees, whose flickering
leaves

Chequered the placid water of a moat,
Weed-spotted, sound asleep, beneath the
walls,

Except when the portcullis, clanging
down,

Shattered its sky and trees to sliding
planes

Of colour tipping with the tilt of waves.
Above the angry walls was gleam of grass
Shuttled with gold and white, for on a
terrace

A peacock strutted between carven
shields

Flanking the angles of a balustrade.
Sometimes, at night, Neron would climb
the hill,

And crouching down beside the brooding
moat

Gaze at the silent glisten of the roof
And ivy-twinkling walls, and speculate
Which hollow window opened on the
room

Where the queen slept, and curse the
bearded king

With full-mouthed curses. Then, as
dreaming grew,

He saw the queen at work within her
bower

Surrounded by her ladies, stitching on
A blue-green tapestry where hunters ran,
And spotted dogs plunged into a blue
stream

After an offer, Neron boldly stepped
Into the bower and nodded to the ladies
Who crept away and left him with the
queen.

But nothing happened, for that night
the king came.

Though Neron luckily escaped before.

He wrenched his wits to find some casual
way

When he might urge himself upon her
thought

Whose numb inconsequence was salt and
flame

Set to the green wound of his smarting
flesh.

But the dream halted at this very spot,
He could not push it to a consumma-
tion.

He heaved upon it with his new-found
strength.

Fully persuaded that he served her cause
By this he had in mind. The dream gave
way.

The queen surrendered on the very terrace
Where the white peacock strutted. She
whispered Neron

Where she would be at sunset, gave him
the key

Of a small turret-chamber. He found her
there,

Her slender shadow stretching to the door
To welcome him; and she, beyond her
shadow,

Stood waiting in the crimson sunset light.
A slender silver foxglove flushed with
rose.

There was no sound except the golden
boom

Of bees among the honeysuckle flowers
Stirring against the wall. For neither
spoke,

Being removed past any reach of speech
 Into that silent space of holiness
 Where flesh creates the everlasting world.
 But there the bearded king broke in upon
 them,
 The king whose dream would never enter
 Neron's.
 When Neron saw that thorny face, he
 leapt
 To hide it from the queen. Calling his
 dream,
 He strode upon the king, and the dream
 followed
 Inch by inch after him, close as a shadow.
 But Neron's dream was mighty with ful-
 filment,
 It strove with the king's dream, and he
 and Neron
 Stood each beside his dream and urged
 it forward
 With shouts and cries. The battle
 roared between them.
 The king's dream crowded down on
 Neron's dream
 To smother it. But Neron's dream arose,
 Flinging the king's dream off, and towered
 up
 Tremendous in its brilliance. Then the
 king,
 To save his dream, threw his black beard
 upon it,
 The heaviness of hair shut out the bril-
 liance,
 At which his dream, revived to fearful
 fury,
 Came on at Neron's dream, and the two
 clashed
 With a great noise together, and their
 bodies
 Rang each on each like cymbals in the
 gloom
 Sprung suddenly about them. With the
 dark,
 The king's dream waxed monstrous in
 shape and stature,
 Belemoth treading on a puny earth.
 So did it stand and move, a ponderous
 bulk,
 The nimbleness of Neron's dream was
 nothing.
 The king's dream lifted like a rock and
 drove
 The air snarling before it to a height
 Past vision, thence it fell on Neron's
 dream,

Splitting its back from end to end, and
 Neron
 Waggled his palsied hands about and
 wept.
 The verger, coming up with Neron's food,
 Found what was left the day before un-
 touched.
 But being somewhat slow of wit, indeed
 A person of marked unagility
 Where thinking was concerned, what
 speculations
 Another might have had, he was without.
 So laying the second dole beside the first
 He stumped downstairs to dust the chan-
 cel rail.
 But when, next day, two baskets greeted
 him,
 Both full, he felt enough perplexity
 To risk a whistle on it; and the third
 Encounter with the baskets, all of them,
 Induced such lively wonder that he
 climbed
 The three long flights of curling stairs
 to see
 What ailed old Neron. Scratching match
 on match
 He came at last upon him, crushed be-
 neath
 A fallen wooden statue, dead as nails,
 "The poor old beggar was dead as last
 year's fly,"
 He told his mates, and later told the
 Dean,
 And also mentioned something of a
 figure
 Of painted wood. And there were two
 of them,
 A king and queen, so wondrously pre-
 served
 They looked quite new, although the
 architect
 Pronounced them very early specimens
 Of thirteenth century work, at which the
 Dean
 And Chapter all said "Ah!" and spent
 a week
 Searching old records for a hint of them.
 The local antiquaries blew the dust
 From ancient chronicles and scared their
 eyes
 With cryptic script to learn what history
 Made mention of an inky-bearded king
 Whose iron mien portended fearful
 things,

And who the queen, so obviously mis-
mated?
But not a dusty chronicle gave tongue.
Baffled, they placed them in the town
museum
Cautiously labelled, "Ancient King and
Queen,
Fine specimens of Thirteenth Century
Carving."
And what of Neron? Neron was a pauper,
They buried him, of course, in Potter's
Field,
Where you can see him turned to purple
thistles
Purveying exquisite delight to donkeys
On Sundays, holidays, and festivals,
When the white sky is filled with
hallelujahs
Profusely scattered by Cathedral bells.

THE SISTERS

Taking us by and large, we're a queer lot
We women who write poetry. And when
you think
How few of us there've been, it's queerer
still.
I wonder what it is that makes us do it,
Singles us out to scribble down, man-wise,
The fragments of ourselves. Why are we
Already mother-creatures, double-bearing,
With matrices in body and in brain?
I rather think that there is just the reason
We are so sparse a kind of human being;
The strength of forty thousand Atlases
Is needed for our every-day concerns.
There's Sapho, now I wonder what was
Sapho.
I know a single slender thing about her:
That, loving, she was like a burning birch-
tree
All tall and glittering fire, and that she
wrote
Like the same fire caught up to Heaven
and held there,
A frozen blaze before it broke and fell.
Ah, me! I wish I could have talked to
Sapho,
Surprised her reticences by flinging mine
Into the wind. This tossing off of gar-
ments
Which cloud the soul is none too easy
doing
With us to-day. But still I think with
Sapho

One might accomplish it, were she in
the mood
To bare her loveliness of words and tell
The reasons, as she possibly conceived
them,
Of why they are so lovely. Just to know
How she came at them, just to watch
The crisp sea sunshine playing on her
hair,
And listen, thinking all the while 'twas
she
Who spoke and that we two were sisters
Of a strange, isolated little family.
And she is Sapho — Sapho — not Miss
or Mrs.,
A leaping fire we call so for convenience;
But Mrs. Browning — who would ever
think
Of such presumption as to call her "Ba."
Which draws the perfect line between
sea-cliffs
And a close-shuttered room in Wimpole
Street.
Sapho could fly her impulses like bright
Balloons tip-tilting to a morning air
And write about it. Mrs. Browning's
heart
Was squeezed in stiff conventions. So
she lay
Stretched out upon a sofa, reading Greek
And speculating, as I must suppose,
In just this way on Sapho; all the need,
The huge, imperious need of loving,
crushed
Within the body she believed so sick.
And it was sick, poor lady, because words
Are merely simulacra after deeds
Have wrought a pattern; when they take
the place
Of actions they breed a poisonous miasma
Which, though it leave the brain, eats
up the body.
So Mrs. Browning, aloof and delicate,
Lay still upon her sofa, all her strength
Going to uphold her over-topping brain.
It seems miraculous, but she escaped
To freedom and another motherhood
Than that of poems. She was a very
woman
And needed both.
If I had gone to call,
Would Wimpole Street have been the
kindlier place,
Or Casa Guidi, in which to have met her?
I am a little doubtful of that meeting,

For Queen Victoria was very young and strong
 And all-pervading in her apogee
 At just that time. If we had stuck to poetry,
 Sternly refusing to be drawn off by mesmerism
 Or Roman revolutions, it might have done.

For, after all, she is another sister,
 But always, I rather think, an older sister
 And not herself so curious a technician
 As to admit newfangled modes of writing —

"Except, of course, in Robert, and that is neither

Here nor there for Robert is a genius."
 I do not like the turn this dream is taking,

Since I am very fond of Mrs. Browning
 And very much indeed should like to hear her

Graciously asking me to call her "Ba."
 But then the Devil of Verisimilitude
 Creeps in and forces me to know she wouldn't.

Convention again, and how it chafes my nerves,

For we are such a little family
 Of singing sisters, and as if I didn't know
 What those years felt like tied down to the sofa.

Confounded Victoria, and the slimy inhibitions

She loosed on all us Anglo-Saxon creatures!

Suppose there hadn't been a Robert Browning,

No "Sonnets from the Portuguese" would have been written.

They are the first of all her poems to be,
 One might say, fertilized. For, after all,

A poet is flesh and blood as well as brain
 And Mrs. Browning, as I said before,
 Was very, very woman. Well, there are two

Of us, and vastly unlike that's for certain.

Unlike at least until we tear the veils
 Away which commonly gird souls. I scarcely think

Mrs. Browning would have approved the process

In spite of what had surely been relief;

For speaking souls must always want to speak

Even when bat-eyed, narrow-minded Queens

Set prudishness to keep the keys of impulse.

Then do the frowning Gods invent new banes

And make the need of sofas. But Sappho was dead

And I, and others, not yet peeped above
 The edge of possibility. So that's an end

To speculating over tea-time talks
 Beyond the movement of pentameters

With Mrs. Browning.

But I go dreaming on,
 In love with these my spiritual relations.

I rather think I see myself walk up
 A flight of wooden steps and ring a bell

And send a card in to Miss Dickinson.

Yet that's a very silly way to do.

I should have taken the dream twist-ends about

And climbed over the fence and found her deep

Engrossed in the doing of a humming-bird

Among nasturtiums. Not having expected strangers,

She might forget to think me one, and holding up

A finger say quite casually: "Take care,
 Don't frighten him, he's only just begun."

"Now this," I well believe I should have thought,

"Is even better than Sappho. With Emily
 You're really here, or never anywhere at all

In range of mind." Wherefore, having begun

In the strict centre, we could slowly progress

To various circumferences, as we pleased.
 We could, but should we? That would quite depend

On Emily. I think she'd be exacting,
 Without intention possibly, and ask

A thousand tight-rope tricks of understanding.

But, bless you, I would somersault all day
 If by so doing I might stay with her.

I hardly think that we should mention souls

Although they might just round the corner from us

In some half-quizzical, half-wistful metaphor.

I'm very sure that I should never seek
To turn her parables to stated fact.
Sapho would speak, I think, quite openly,
And Mrs. Browning guard a careful
silence,
But Emily would set doors ajar and slam
them
And love you for your speed of observa-
tion.

Strange trio of my sisters, most diverse,
And how extraordinarily unlike
Each to me, and which way shall I
go?

Sapho spent and gained; and Mrs. Brown-
ing,

After a miser girlhood, cut the strings
Which tied her money-bags and let them
run;

But Emily hoarded — hoarded — only
giving

Herself to cold, white paper. Starved
and tortured,

She cheated her despair with games of
patience

And fooled herself by winning. Frail
little elf,

The lonely brain-child of a gaunt
maturity,

She hung her womanhood upon a bough
And played ball with the stars — too long
— too long —

The garment of herself hung on a tree
Until at last she lost even the desire
To take it down. Whose fault? Why
let us say,

To be consistent, Queen Victoria's,
But really, not to over-rate the queen,
I feel obliged to mention Martin Luther,
And behind him the long line of Church
Fathers

Who draped their prudence like a dirty
cloth

About the naked majesty of God.

Good-bye, my sisters, all of you are great,
And all of you are marvellously strange,
And none of you has any word for me.

I cannot write like you. I cannot think
In terms of Pagan or of Christian now.
I only hope that possibly some day
Some other woman with an itch for
writing

May turn to me as I have turned to you

And chat with me a brief few minutes.

How
We lie, we poets! It is three good hours
I have been dreaming. Has it seemed so
long

To you? And yet I thank you for the
time

Although you leave me sad and self-dis-
trustful,

For older sisters are very sobering things.
Put on your cloaks, my dears, the motor's
waiting.

No, you have not seemed strange to me,
but near,

Frightfully near, and rather terrifying.
I understand you all, for in myself —

Is that presumption? Yet indeed it's
true —

We are one family. And still my answer
Will not be any one of yours, I see.

Well, never mind that now. Good night!
Good night!

VIEW OF TEIGNMOUTH IN DEVONSHIRE

*"Atkins the coachman, Bartlett the
surgeon, and the Girls over at the Bonnet-
shop, say we shall now have a month of
seasonable weather — warm, witty, and
full of invention."*

Letter from Keats to Reynolds.
March 14, 1818

It's a soppy, splashy, muddy country
And he is dead sick of stair and entry,
Of four walls cuddling round his chair,
And breathing full as much water as air.
London is so far away

It dreams, like Latmos. He has sat all
day

Copying that cursed Fourth Book and
he's struck

A snag, and his drying sand won't suck.
His mind's like a seed gone to rot with
rain,

And — Damn it, there's poor Tom
coughing again!

Mr. John Keats crams his hat well on
Over his ears and walks up and down

The soggy streets of Teignmouth town.
Mr. John Keats walks along the streets

Of Teignmouth and asks every soul he
meets

If the sun ever shines in Devonshire,
Whether the weather they live with here
Is sometimes what one might really call
fair,

With the sun in the sky and a brisk to
the air?

The hat of Mr. John Keats is wet,
But his eyes are sharp and ferret-set,
He is seeking the sun with a quicksilver-
rod,

Noting the veer in a neighbour's nod,
Gauging the drift of a neighbour's words
As they might be a flock of South-come
birds.

Atkins, the coachman, sets his mug
Down on the counter and gives a shrug,
"Lor' love you, Sir, if I was to tell
The way I know, you might call it smell.
I smell it right across the rain,
Dry and gentle; it's plain as plain
To-day, I give it a week to run,
This rain, and then we'll have the sun,
As skittish as a piebald colt
And sudden as a thunderbolt.
All full o' notions, that's the way
Of the sun down here on a Summer's
day.

Just take my word, before you've said
'Jack Robinson,' you'll be hugging the
shade

Of every wall, and sweatin' in
A steam like my team when I bring 'em
in.

Well, thank ye, Sir, I don't mind if I do,
Brandy neat is my usual brew."

Smell it, could he? The man's insane.
Smell the sun through a week of rain!
Yet the thought has a kind of glamour
to it,

A relish of wit, however you view it,
A rainbow quip for a rainy day.
Mr. Keats, plodding through wet clay,
Is aware of a certain direct effect
Of joy in his heart. He stands erect.
Surely the mist is silvering
His footsteps sound with a livelier ring.
If anything glitters in Teignmouth streets
This afternoon, it is John Keats.

Mr. Bartlett is hurrying by
At a speed which announces that minutes
fly,
But he pauses briefly just to say

"Ah, Mr. Keats, how are you to-day?

The sun? Oh, very shortly now.

We shall be scorched before we know.

Didn't you hear the crows this morning?

They always give one plenty of warning.

And Mrs. Bartlett talks of house-cleaning,

Every married man can read the meaning

Of that. When the women begin to
clack

It's a surer sign than the almanac.

The barometer's risen a point or two

Since yesterday, and this mist is blue,

Not grey. I am sorry I cannot stop,

But a surgeon is always on the hop,

If it's not for one thing, it's another.

Of course you're anxious because of your
brother.

Tell him he'll soon have all the basking
In sunlight he wants, and just for the
asking.

But I must go, Mrs. Green's brought to
bed —

Oh, tell him to keep it off of his head."

Smash! Bang! Mr. Keats. Another chain
Is snapped, and there's a gold tint to the
rain.

Simmons the barber's as shrunk as a
pippin

Hung on a beam which you might nick a
chip in,

But never could suck for its juice is all
dried.

This afternoon he is standing inside

His doorway, just behind his pole,

With the mien of a migratory soul

Perching an instant before departing

Otherwhere, he seems always just starting

To leave, a whirling weather-cock

On the edge of flight, but tied to a block.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Keats," says he,

"Brushing up a bit for good weather, I
see.

That's the way, young men can tell

A season's turn uncommonly well.

I've had a full day, the whole town at
once.

But when I learnt my trade every dunce
Who could snap a scissors did not dare
hoist a pole.

I remember one day when they called out
the roll

In the old sixty-third, every man of the
lot

Was new shaved and powdered and
wound, and my pot
And razors all cleaned and I with the
rest of them
As spick and as span I could match with
the best of them.
To cut a round head requires some skill,
But nothing to binding a cue, there's a
thrill
In a nicely tied cue, I can't see how the
girls
Can put up with a man who wears his
own curls.
But fashion is fashion, the hussy, and I've
Been her very devoted since I've been
alive.
And, thank God, she has not yet set her
approval
On beads except in the way of removal.
I wish you could feel the delight I re-
ceive
When my razor slides over your skin, I'd
as leave
Shave a man in his twenties as go to a
play,
There's romance in it, Sir, when you see
the soap spray
Into bubbles and lather, and your blade
cuts a line
And lets through the smooth face like a
moon, it's so fine
That I dream it sometimes. I've a soul
for such fancies,
Old barbers like shaving as young girls
like dances.
And one makes the other. Who would
dance a quadrille
With a rough, stubble chin? That
fellow who will
Is a hater of women, a thief in the
egg,
He's just ripe for a ball attached to his
leg.
Why look, Sir, and tell me if fully two-
thirds
Of the unshaven men do not end as jail-
birds.
Our prisons are full of them, I dare to
swear
No convict's without a two-days' growth
of hair.
I don't hold with this personal shaving,
it's sordid.
A man should spend well on himself, I
wish more did.

But no man can cut his own hair, that's
a fact,
And a hair-cut requires a vast deal of tact.
A doctor wants his to look sober and
grave,
Tradesmen are addicted to a float and
a wave,
And again, one must know the sort of
commodity
Your client purveys or there's danger of
oddity.
A butcher cut like a silk-mercer won't do.
And a military man must carry a cue
To his martial exploits in the style of his
head.
While a poet — you're a poet, Sir, I
think I've heard said —
Oh, no, Sir, indeed, not a bit more con-
fined,
A poet's hair should seem the least trifle
inclined
To a graceful disorder, it should look
well when tossed;
If you cut it too short this effect is quite
lost.
Oh, I beg, Mr. Keats, not another least
snip.
Oh, dear, I do really regret that last clip.
I am glad you are pleased, but I don't
think a poet
Should order his hair so that no one can
know it.
Still, you look very well, though I should
have preferred
More dash and confusion for you. I have
heard
That Lord Byron measures his hair with
a rule
Before it is cut, and the least thumbful
Too much taken off sets him all in a
taking.
I've been told of men who couldn't cut
him for shaking.
The weather will change in less than a
week,
I have felt it these last few days on my
cheek,
My skin always answers to the slightest
degree
Of more or less moisture. You'll hardly
agree
That it's dryer and warmer, but my touch
is so fine
I can tell a South wind when it's over
the line.

Of course they'll say different, these poor
 rustic churls,
 But you be all ready for sparking the girls
 By Tuesday. I'll tip you the wink. We
 old men
 Remember our own young days, now and
 again."

Mr. John Keats has a jaunty swing
 In his gait, as he leaves the chattering
 Old barber, bowing beside his door.
 Of course he feels the sort of core
 Of golden sun the mist falls through.
 What is a day, what is two?
 The sun is coming up from the line
 Like a fifty-four with its sails ashine.
 He feels the flower-scented South
 Like a taste of apricot in his mouth.
 He thinks of primroses under the hedge
 Where the pathway runs by the sheer
 cliff edge;

Of the downs above where sheep have
 trod

Crooked grey patterns across the sod,
 And the shadows of turf-walls, cool and
 still,

Mark who owns where all down the
 hill;

Of a long slow ocean, so dazzling bright
 Its blue is smothered in spangled white.
 He thinks of queer sea-paths cross-run-
 ning,

Smooth on ripple, of the quiet sunning
 Of rocks and meadows, of violets
 Creeping through grass, of drying nets,
 Of poetry read with the sun on his book
 And the freckling of leaves for an over-
 look.

Somebody laughs, somebody calls,
 "Good-day, Mr. Keats." It drops from
 the walls,

A perfume of laughter which flutters and
 falls.

Lime-tree blossoms by turret stairs,
 Laughter of flowers no more than theirs,
 Sunny golden acacia blooms
 Peeping into maidens' rooms,
 Snap a spray and throw it over
 The window-ledge to a waiting lover.
 Mr. Keats comes to a stop
 For the girls are over the Bonnet-shop
 Leaning out like waving roses
 Over a gate, most lovely of poses.

"Stay where you are, Girls," says Mr.
 Keats,

"You pose as the dryads of Teignmouth
 streets.

If Haydon were here he would jot you
 down

In a jiffy, with your hair wet and blown
 And your little laughing faces like pansies,"

"La! Mr. Keats, you do have such
 fancies."

"Fancies or no, I believe it clears.

Don't you feel the sun on your cheeks,
 my Dears?

Or smell it perhaps? What do you think?
 There's a hocus-pocus to-day in my
 ink

Which would not let me write a line,
 And I itch for the sight of a columbine.

Tell me, have you noticed anything

Which points to a near-by Summering?"

"Oh yes," said little Number One,

"All day I have felt the sun,

I saw it on a wheat-straw bonnet

I was making, the sun lay upon it,

And I thought the muslin blue-bells were
 sweet."

"That," said Mr. Keats, "is proof com-
 plete."

Said Number Two, "I pricked my thumb
 Three times running, and fair days come
 After three pricks, it is always so.

Grandmother taught me long ago."

"I dreamt last night," said Number
 Three,

"Of a great thick-leaved fuchsia-tree

Full of blossoms, purple and red,

And the blossoms played music over my
 head

Like bells of glass and copper bells
 And wind in the trees when the ocean
 swells

Flood tide over the beach, and shells
 Glisten like rubies with the water sheen

And the sky at the back of the town is
 green."

"You prophesy in a parable,"

Said Mr. Keats. "Oh, April-fool!"

Cried the girls who were over the Bonnet-
 shop.

And their laughter was sweet as a lolly-
 pop

To an urchin's palate in his ears.

With a gesture, he brushed aside their
 jeers.

"But will it clear?" "Of course it will,"

Said the three, "If you patiently wait
 until

It does." And they laughed in a rain-
bow chord,
High, and low, and middleward.
And Mr. Keats laughed too, though he
knew

That they had not said one word in two
Of what he'd imagined they might have
said.

But who cares a button who bakes the
bread

So the bread is baked? And a Bonnet-
shop

May be what you please, even Latmos
top.

So Mr. Keats went blithely on,
Quite as if the round sun shone,
Back to his copying his Fourth Book.
And the girls watched him until a crook
In the street, when he turned it, hid him
from sight.

Then they noticed that it was growing
night.

So they put their bonnets away, and the
three

Lit the lamp and sat down to tea,
Immortal for always, because John Keats
Had taken a walk through Teignmouth
streets,

And stopped when one of them said
"Good-day."

Clio is odd in her ways, they say.
The coachman, the surgeon, the barber,
the girls —

Islands raised out of darkening swirls.
Who else was in Teignmouth that after-
noon?

Vainly may we importune
The shadows, only these have come down
A century from Teignmouth town.
These only from the dark are won
Because John Keats had a hunger for
sun.

FOOL O' THE MOON

The silver-slipped moon treads the blue
tiles of the sky,

And I

See her dressed in golden roses,
With a single breast uncovered,

The carnation tip of it

Urgent for a lover's lip.

So she daunces to a stately

Beat, with poses most sedately

Taken, yet there lies

Something wanton in her gestures,
And there is surprise of coquetry
In the falling of her vestures.
Why?

Out of old mythology,
With a pulse of gourds and sheep-skins,
Banging bronze and metal thunders,
There is she,
Wonderfullest of earth's wonders.

As for me,
Head thrown back and anus spread wide
Like a zany crucified,
I stand watching, waiting, gazing,
All of me spent in amazing,
Longing for her wheat-white thighs,
Thirsting for her emerald fire,
My desire
Pounding dully from my eyes.
And my hands
Clutch and cuddle the vast air
Seeking her where she's most fair.

There,
On the cool blue tiles of heaven.
She is dancing coolly, coldly,
Footsteps trace a braid of seven,
And her gauzy garments fleet
Round her like a glittering fleet.
Suddenly she flings them boldly
In a streaming bannerall
Out behind,
And I see all.
God! I'm blind!

And a goodly company
Of men are we,
Lovers she has chosen,
Laughing-stocks and finger-posts
To the wise, a troupe of ghosts
Swelled by every century.
Mad, and blind, and burnt, and frozen,
Standing on a hilly slope
At bright midnight,
And our hope
Is in vain, or is it not?
Legend knows the very spot
Where the moon once made her bed,
But the pathway as it led
Over rock-brows to that valley
Is an alley choked and dead.
One by one our fates deceive us,
One of hundreds will be shown
Ferny uplands whose great bosses
Of tall granite hide the mosses

Where our Lady's lying prone,
All her stars withdrawn, alone.
So she chooses to receive us,
Out of hundreds, only one.

Such a vale of moss and heather
Spreads about us, hither — thither.
Hush!

Shall I tell what befell
Once behind that bush.
When the rattling pods at noon
Made a music in September.
Shall I say what I remember —
While the long, sea-grasses croon,
And the sea-spray on the sand
Chips the silence from the land?
Hush, then, let me say it soon.
I have lain with Mistress Moon.

TOMB VALLEY

Down a cliff-side where rock-roses,
Shallow-rooted, scanty bloom,
And the mountain goats in passing
Barely find a foothold's room,
While the boulders of the summit
Cast an everlasting gloom.

Leaps a torrent from behind
The juttèd angle of a wall
In a long, unbroken sliding,
For it touches not at all
Any rock, or stone, or pebble
For a thousand feet of fall.

For a thousand feet it rushes
Like a heavy, laden air,
Playing over some tremendous
Sound which surely must be there,
For you hear it, lose it, hear it.
Does it come from anywhere?

Seething, bubbling, churning, groaning,
Has the water in its flight
Shattered on the stony bottom
Of the valley, while its height
Drawing upward like a ribbon
Palely grows upon the sight?

But the sound is chiller, deeper,
Long and dreary like a moan
Caught forever on an echo
"Twixt two balanced shafts of stone,
Whence it surges and resurges
In protracted monotone.

Far below, within the valley,
Runs a river, cold and sleek,
Never oar has cut its smoothness,
It has shattered on no beak
Of shallop or of galley,
Its tide is slow and meek.

And the trees within that valley,
Of every broad-leaved kind,
Wave to and fro compactly,
For there's never any wind.
Ten thousand branches blowing
All one way is hard to find.

And the shadows which their movement
Casts upon the sandy ground
Are like footsteps weaving dances
To that ghastly, haunting sound
Ringing round the chilly valley,
Round and round and round and round.

Where the river curves about it,
And the water lilies strew
Silver petals on the pebbles
Mingling with dropped cones of yew,
Stands a sepulchre of granite
Striped with bars of green and blue.

Green and blue bars painted crosswise
From its bottom to its crown,
At its apex is a statue,
Coldly, boldly, gazing down,
Gazing fiercely, gazing wildly,
In an everlasting frown.

And upon its knees a woman
Kneels and clasps the granite thighs,
And clings upon the roughened stone
While tears drop from her eyes.
The surly yews wave back and forth
Beneath a red moonrise.

And a hollow, draughty moaning
Fills the valley like a gong.
Women's voices weeping, wailing,
All the waving trees among,
Where no shapes or shadows flicker
But the low moon, broad and long.

Slowly rising from the cliff-tops,
Like a gnawed and crumbled cone,
It appears in perfect semblance
To a sepulchre of stone,
And the bars are striped upon it
Like cross-sticks of blackened bone.

In a bitter orange moonlight
Lies the woman on the knees
Of that austere thing of granite,
All surrounded by the trees,
And the curling, sneering river,
And nothing else but these.

On a sudden, she has risen,
And with clenched fists beats the face
Of that frozen granite horror.
And her blows in that drear place
Are as thunder-claps resounding
Upon vastnesses of space.

For an instant still she batters
At that changeless, mocking frown,
Then flings her bleeding hands
Above her head and plunges down
To the smooth and careful river
With sere rushes overgrown.

But no ripple marks her entrance
To that water, bright as flame,
And no pucker stirs the granite face
To tell she ever came.
The trees blow and the moaning
Continues just the same.

But every moonlight night, they say,
She drowns herself once more,
And by the queasy daylight
You can see her from the shore
Lying like a lily petal
On the river's glassy floor.

So they say, but no one proves it.
No one ever ventures in
To that valley. Only passers-by
Above can hear a thin
Weary wailing, if they note it
Through the torrent's distant din.

As they wander on the cliff-edge
Where the scant rock-roses blow,
And the mountain goats go shrewdly
In the footways that they know,
While the crash of tumbling water
Sounds a thousand feet below.

THE GREEN PARRAKEET

"Three doors up from the end of
the street
Hung a golden cage with a green
parrakeet."

His feet shambled in the dust of the road,
and the little barberry bushes
hung out red tongues and leered
at him.

He shuffled on, down the road, bent as
though it might be a load he was
carrying, while tiers and tiers of
poplars, birches, hemlocks, pines,
peered to see who it might be
who stumbled and flung the dust
about,

And the grey grape-vines, in and out
between the bushes, ran beside
him and looked in his face.

But his pace never changed a whit for
all their staring. He shuffled on
at his long way-faring.

"Morning and night, to the green
parrakeet

She sang, and Oh, her singing was
sweet!"

The road dipped down to a marsh, and
the meadow-larks sang as he
passed them, but his ears rang
with another singing so that he
heard nothing.

"By the North Wind's whistle, he is
blind!" said a mouse-wood to an
elder-bush.

"Hush," cried the grape-vines, "you do
not catch his dust. It is the dust
of something a long way off."

"Her kisses were a flower red;
I saw them on the bird's green head.
Her breasts were white as almond
bean

And the parrakeet nestled in be-
tween."

"Oh, gently, gently," sighed the senti-
mental vines, but the long lines
of trees behind them objected
that he took a great while to go
by.

"We are better employed," they de-
clared, "contemplating the sky."

Then I knocked at the door and
entered in

Like the orange flame of a hidden
sin.

I stood before her and there were
three—

The parrakeet and I and she.

I tossed her arms apart and pressed
Myself upon her, breast to breast,
And the parakeet was my hidden
guest.

I forced her lips till they caught on
mine,
And poured myself down her throat
like wine.

I mingled with her, part for part,
But the parakeet lay next her heart.
Oh, sweeter than her lips were sweet
Was my utter hate for that parakeet.

She fell from me like the withered
shell

Of a cranberry, and it was well;
I stood on the other side of Hell.
Slowly, slowly, she raised her head,
But the parakeet fell down like lead
Upon the matting, still and dead.
Softly, softly, she gazed at me,
And I saw a thing which I dared not
see.

"My love!" she said, and the tones
were sweet

As ever she used to the parakeet.
But I had made my flaming breast
A weapon to kill a bird on its nest —
A single flame for the bird and me,
And I was as smothered as he could
be.

I stared at her from the farther side
Of Hell, no space is great beside
This space. I could not see her face
Across such vastitude of space,
And over it drowsed a darkened
thing:

A monster parakeet's green wing.
The air was starred with parakeets.
I turned and rushed into the streets.
For days and days I wandered there,
For Oh! My love was very fair!
Each night I watched her lean and
stand,

With empty heart and empty hand,
While every passer-by she scanned.
But I beheld what was not meet
For all to see — a parakeet
Of gauzy substance which could cast
No slightest shadow where it passed,
Fluttering with indecent glee
Between my hungering love and me.
Ten months went by, and then one
day

It struck my face and flew away.

Some odd obedience in my feet
Compelled me after, street by street,
And then along a country lane.
I had no power to turn again.
Next morning took me farther still,
My feet usurped the place of will,
And now I walk a weary road,
Bent double underneath the load
Of memory and second sight.
That bird is always on my right
And just ahead, I follow where
His body flickers through the air.
Sometimes it is as plain as print,
Sometimes no better than a hint
Of colour where no leaves are green
But I can see what I have seen.
How many years is that ago?
I notice night and morning flow
Each into each, the seasons run
Against the turning of the sun,
But more or fewer — 'tis all one.
She may be dead, and I may be
A ghost myself, eternally
Dreaming the short, ironic bliss
Of one long, unrepeatable kiss.

The man scuffed across a bridge and up
a steep hill. "Quietly, quietly,"
whispered the barberry-bushes,
and hid their scarlet tongues
under the leaves. "Weep, Tree-
Brothers," said the grape-vines.
But the long lines of trees only
rustled and played hide and seek
with the peeping moon. They
were too tall to pay much heed to
anything so small as an old man
limping up a hill.

TIME'S ACRE

Beat, beat, with your soft grey feet,
Tear at the cold, rough stone.
His grave is here, but it's many a year
Since the grass on it was mown.

His ears are crumbled to bitter dust,
His eyes are a hollow bone.
Your twisting hair is bright and fair,
But he is under a stone.

Go back again to your own wide tomb,
Leave him in peace within
His grave that is narrow and shallow and
small,

There is no room for two between either
wall,
And the walls are caving in.

There are nests of worms in the under-
ground,
And the grass-roots wind across,
Like a counterpane to keep out the rain
Is the green-eyed, clutching moss.

Go back to your tomb a mile away,
Go back through the still brouze door,
The arms which are carven upon its front
Are there as they were before.

No trace of esentheon is on this stone,
And buttocks have pushed it awry,
And the flowers on tiptoe out of his
mouth
Are staring into the sky.

Over his grave is a moan of wind,
And hemlock-trees bow down,
And a hemlock cone lies on the stone
Stained with smoke from the town.

What have you to do in this dismal place
By a dingy, broken stone?
He has no hands and he has no face,
And bone cannot wed with bone.

You took his flesh and you took his
heart,
But his bones are his own to keep.
Knuckle and straight, he has them all
Down in the gravel deep.

Perhaps he laughs with his hard grey
mouth,
Perhaps he shouts with glee,
And cuddles his bones up one by one,
And wishes that you could see.

Perhaps he plays jackstones with his
bones,
And bets how long you will stay,
He knows all about those bright bronze
doors
Waiting a mile away.

For you in the flesh teased him in the
flesh
And would not let him be,
Till you teased him out of his flesh for
good
And into Eternity.

But what is fire to a living man
Is nothing at all to a bone.
He lies at ease in the cold and the mold,
And he lies at ease alone.

He will be part of the earth in time,
You will be only dust,
And your carven door will be nothing
more
Than a heap of eating rust.

So much for your azure fleur-de-lis,
And your cross in a chevron d'or.
He will be lilies in a morning breeze
At the foot of a symonite.

The world goes round, and the world goes
round,
And who knows what may come out of
the ground
When a man is planted under a mound.

SULTRY

To those who can see them, there are
eyes,
Leopard eyes of marigolds crouching above
red earth,
Bulging eyes of fruits and rubies in the
heavily-hanging trees,
Broken eyes of queasy cupids staring from
the gloom of myrtles.
I came here for solitude
And I am plucked at by a host of eyes.

A peacock spreads his tail on the balus-
trade
And every eye is a mood of green malice,
A challenge and a fear.
A hornet flashes above geraniums,
Spying upon me in a trick of cunning.
And Hermes,
Hermes the implacable,
Points at me with a fractured arm.

Vengeful god of smooth, imperishable
loveliness,
You are more savage than the goat-legged
Pan,
Than the crocodile of carven yew-wood.
Fisherman of men's eyes,
You catch them on a three-pronged spear:
Your youth, your manhood,
The reticence of your everlasting revela-
tion.

I too am become a cunning eye
 Seeking you past your time-gnawed surface,
 Seeking you back to hyacinths upon a
 dropping hill,
 Where legend drowns in a glaze of sea.

Yours are the eyes of a bull and a pan-
 ther,
 For all that they are chiselled out and
 the sockets empty.
 You — perfectly imperfect,
 Clothed in a garden,
 In innumerable gardens,
 Borrowing the eyes of fruits and flowers —
 And mine also, cold, impossible god,
 So that I stare back at myself
 And see myself with loathing.

A quince-tree flings a crooked shadow —
 My shadow, tortured out of semblance,
 Bewildered in quince boughs.
 His shadow is clear as a scissored sil-
 houette.
 Heat twinkles and the eyes glare.
 And I, of the mingled shadow,
 I glare
 And see nothing.

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE

TO EDGAR ALLAN POE

Old crumbling stones set long ago upon
 The naked headland of a suave green
 shore.
 Old stones all riven into cracks and
 glands

By moss and ivy. Up above, a peak
 Of narrow, iron windows, a hooded tower
 With frozen windows looking to the
 West.

When the sun sets, a winking, fiery light
 Rifles the window-panes above the gloom
 Of purple waters heaving evenly,
 Waters moving about the naked headland
 In sombre slowness, with no dash of
 spray

To strike the stagnant pools and flash the
 weeds.

A rack of shifting clouds
 Darkens the waters' margin. On the
 shore
 Are clusters of great trees whose brittle
 leaves

Crackle together as the mournful wind

Takes them and shakes them. But the
 tower windows
 Fling bloody streams of light across the
 dusk,
 Planges of bloody light which the upper
 sky
 Has hurled at them and now is drawing
 back.
 Behind the tower, where no windows
 are,
 A little wisp of moon catches the stone;
 So that they glitter palely from the shore.
 The suave green shore with all its leaden
 trees.

AUTUMN AND DEATH

They are coy, these sisters, Autumn and
 Death,
 And they both have learnt what it is to
 wait.
 Not a leaf is jarred by their cautious
 breath,
 The little feather-weight
 Petals of climbing convolvulus
 Are scarcely even tremulous.

Who hears Autumn moving down
 The garden-paths? Who marks her head
 Above the oat-sheaves? A leaf gone brown
 On the ash, and a maple-leaf turned
 red —

Yet a rose that's freshly blown
 Seals your eyes to the change in these,
 For it's mostly green about the trees.

And Death with her silver-slippered feet,
 Do you hear her walk by your garden-
 chair?

The cool of her hand makes a tempered
 heat,

That's all, and the shadow of her hair
 Is curiously sweet.

Does she speak? If so, you have not
 heard;

The whisper of Death is without a word.

The sisters, Autumn and Death, with
 strange

Long silences, they bide their time,
 Nor ever step beyond the range

Allotted to a pantomime.

But the soundless hours chime,

One after one, and their faces grow
 To an altered likeness, slow — slow.

Grim is the face which Autumn turns
To a sky all bare of obscuring leaves,
And her hair is red as a torch where it
burns
In the dry hearts of the oaten sheaves.
But Death has a face which yearns
With a gaunt desire upon its prey,
And Death's dark face hides yesterday.

Then Autumn holds her hands to touch
Death's hands, and the two kiss, cheek
by cheek,
And one smiles to the other, and the
smiles say much,
And neither one has need to speak.
Two gray old sisters, such
Are Autumn and Death when their tasks
are done,
And their world is a world where a
blackened sun
Shines like ebony over the flocs
Of a shadeless ice, and no wind blows.

FOLIE DE MINUIT

No word, no word, O Lord God!
Hanging above the shivering pillars
Like thunder over a brazen city.

Pity. Is there pity?
Does pity pour from the multiform
points
Of snow crystals?
If the throats of the organ pipes
Are numb with cold,
Can the boldest bellows' blast
Melt their now dumb hosannas?

No word, august and brooding God!
No shrivelled spectre of an aching tone
Can pierce those banners
Which hide your face, your hands,
Your feet at whose slight tread
Frore water curds to freckled sands
Seaweed encrusted.
The organ loft is draughty with faint
voices
Weeping,
Which are not mine, nor would be.
I purposed anthems, copper-red and
golden,
Thrusting to the hearts of Babylonian
Kings,
Bowed down before Judea and its Highest,

That God of Hosts who screens himself
with banners.
My finger-tips are cast in a shard of
silence;
The worn lips of these great, narrow
tunnels, the pipes,
Are choked with silence;
The banners, the banners, are brittle with
decay
And rusted out of colour.

The candles gutter in their sconces,
Curling long welts of evil-smelling smoke
about my head.
The organ's voice is dead,
Or is it mine?
The banners flap
Like palls upon a bier
On windy midnight burials
Where torches flare a glittering imposture
About the loneliness of violated sod
Cashed open for a grave.

Pity me, then,
Who cry with wingless psalms,
Spellbound in midnight and chill organ
pipes.
Above my eyes the banners bleed
Their dripping dust-specks,
Proclaiming the gaunt glories of success-
ful battles.
It would enchant me to see you afloat
behind them,
Blown for a moment to an eye-catch.
But who are you to come for frozen
hallelujahs!

And yet I go on silently playing.

THE SLIPPERS OF THE GODDESS OF BEAUTY

*"It is easy, like Momus, to find fault
with the clattering of the slipper worn
by the Goddess of beauty; but the serious
Gods' found better employment in ad-
miration of her unapproachable loveli-
ness."*

They clatter, clatter, clatter on the floor,
Her slippers clack upon the marble
slabs,
And every time her heels clap, I count
one,

And go on counting till my nerves are sick
With one and one and one told out in claps.

He shot a hand out, clutching at my arm
With bony fingers. "Young man," said he, "look up.

Is that a starry face, or am I blind?
Do stars beset her like a crown of pearls?
Does sunset tinge and tangle in her hair,
And moonlight rush in silver from her breasts?

Look well, young man, for maybe I am blind."

I looked, and agony assailed my brain.
He chirruped at me. "So — so! Ancient eyes

Know better than to keep upon the floor.
What dazzles you is kindly sight to me,
One gets accustomed. But I interrupt
Your count. What figure had you reached?" I shook

Him off and staggered to my room,
Bright pain
Stabbing my head.

I've never found that count,
Nor started on another. Every day
I look a little longer when she comes,
And see a little more, and bear to see.
But that queer man I've never met again,
Nor very much desired to, perhaps.
Gratitude is an irksome thing to youth,
And I, thank Hennes, am still reckoned young,
Though old enough to look above the floor,
Which is a certain age, I must admit.
But I'll endure that, seeing what it brings.

THE WATERSHED

You say you are my friends,
Coming mistily to greet me in your
streets and places,
Handing me roses which are not tinsel
surely,
That much is no gainsaying, but there it
ends.
For you, the friendly people, are a vision
of massed faces,
A large wavering smile of something I
shrink to call derision.
And yet I take your roses demurely

And express my obligation with a nice
precision.

Why should I quarrel with what Fate
sends?

Poppycock! For indeed I am not a fool.
Next year, perhaps, I shall be no more
to you than a sick mountebank.

Therefore, while I thank you for your
roses,

I hold apart and I too smile,
Bitterly, if you will have it so; but while
I wonder you should laud me for a minute,
I wonder more by what strange finger-
rule

You find your praise so easy to be spilt —
The brimful ease of it your chief of poses.
Am I the creature you have swiftly built
Since yesterday, who, formerly, for all you
thought,

Printed too light a circle even to round
a naught?

Or am I what you'll have me by to-
morrow?

There's worry to keep me busy dabbling
in it,

And pricks enough to start a pretty sor-
row.

Don't think, you polype blur of friendli-
ness,

That any attitude you choose to take
Affects me otherwise than so much less
Than atom's atom. Scarcely for your
sake

Would I consent even to notice where
You seem most thickly to invest the air,
Making a coloured rose-bud of the sun.
Your sneers, I think, would leave me well
aware

Of something I might boast a bit of
having;

Your smooth and pitiless content with
what I do

Shows up each whorl and roughness in
the grain

Of that harsh article I call my brain,
Of that queer heart all twisted like a
shaving

I seldom fret about. So after being
Encumbered for a brief space by your
roses

I think to find your subsequent composure
As apt and cheerful as a new disclosure
Broke suddenly across a weary seeing.

Your waning praise will mark a time of day,
 And afternoon approaching finds my way
 So far advanced, that's all. You are a stage
 We reach at ten o'clock and twelve is age.
 If I'm an episode, why so are you.
 We'll make a kindness of that—what else is there to do?

LA RONDE DU DIABLE

"Here we go round the ivy-bush,"
 And that's a tune we all dance to.
 Little poet people snatching ivy,
 Trying to prevent one another from
 snatching ivy.
 If you get a leaf, there's another for me;
 Look at the bush.
 But I want your leaf, Brother, and you
 mine,
 Therefore, of course, we push.

"Here we go round the laurel-tree."
 Do we want laurels for ourselves most,
 Or most that no one else shall have any?
 We cannot stop to discuss the question.
 We cannot stop to plait them into
 crowns
 Or notice whether they become us.
 We scarcely see the laurel-tree,
 The crowd about us is all we see,
 And there's no room in it for you and
 me.
 Therefore, Sisters, it's my belief
 We've none of us very much chance at
 a leaf.

"Here we go round the barberry-bush."
 It's a bitter, blood-red fruit at best,
 Which puckers the mouth and burns the
 heart.
 To tell the truth, only one or two
 Want the berries enough to strive
 For more than he has, more than she.
 An acid berry for you and me.
 Abundance of berries for all who will eat,
 But an aching meat.
 That's poetry.
 And who wants to swallow a mouthful
 of sorrow?
 The world is old and our century
 Must be well along, and we've no time
 to waste.

Make haste, Brothers and Sisters, push
 With might and main round the ivy-
 bush,
 Struggle and pull at the laurel-tree,
 And leave the barberries be.
 For poor lost lunatics like me,
 Who set them so high
 They overtop the sun in the sky.
 Does it matter at all that we don't know
 why?

MORNING SONG, WITH DRUMS

The pheasants cry in the dawn,
 Mocking the glitter of the nearby city
 Struck upon the sky.

*Ivy in a wind,
 Smooth grass,
 Old cedar-trees.*

Change is a bitter thing to contemplate
 Across a grey dawn.
 Puff-ball world, forsooth,
 A kick and it is broken into smoke.

The pheasant's cry is raucous in the
 dawn.

A GRAVE SONG

I've a pocketful of emptiness for you, my
 Dear.
 I've a heart like a loaf was baked yes-
 teryear,
 I've a mind like ashes spilt a week
 ago,
 I've a hand like a rusty, cracked cork-
 screw.

Can you flourish on nothing and find it
 good?
 Can you make petrification do for food?
 Can you warm yourself at ashes on a
 stone?
 Can you give my hand the ennuie which
 has gone?

If you can, I will go and lay me
 down
 And kiss the edge of your purple gown.
 I will rise and walk with the sun on my
 head.
 Will you walk with me, will you follow
 the dead?

A RHYME OUT OF MOTLEY

"I grasped a thread of silver; it cut me
to the bone —
I reached for an apple; it was bleak as
a stone —
I reached for a heart, and touched a raw
blade —
And this was the bargain God had made
For a little gift of speech
Set a cubit higher than the common
reach,
A debt running on until the fool is dead."

Carve a Pater Noster to put at his head
As a curse or a prayer,
And leave him there.

THE RED KNIGHT

I saw him,
Standing in red armour before an altar
Under the fish-scale roof of a church
In a river valley in mid-France.
The organ was crying an anthem along
the great nave
And the eddy of it tickled the noses of
the impish stone manikins with foxes'
tails curled beneath the architraves.
When the organ ceased crying, he lifted
his head
And gazed through the clear-story win-
dows at the white-blue of an after-
rain sky.
Suddenly a thin scatter of sunlight smote
upon his armour
And it flamed like a bonfire, and he in
the midst, unnoticing.

White wood of poplar beneath green bark,
A man, the height and spread of a tall
man,
Beneath a burning armour.
I would have flung my kerchief to him
to bind upon his helmet,
But kerchiefs fall obliquely through back-
ward centuries,
And already the light was growing too
dim to see a silken nothing upon a
shadowed floor.
Steel footsteps on stone make a strange
sound;
I never heard the like before, and I think
I never shall again.
For which unreasonable reason
I am determined to remain a virgin.

NUIT BLANCHE

I want no horns to rouse me up to-night,
And trumpets make too clamorous a ring
To fit my mood, it is so weary white
I have no wish for doing any thing.

A music coaxed from humming strings
would please;
Not plucked, but drawn in creeping
cadences
Across a sunset wall where some Marquise
Picks a pale rose amid strange silences.

Ghostly and vaporous her gown sweeps by
The twilight dusking wall, I hear her feet
Delaying on the gravel, and a sigh,
Briefly permitted, touches the air like sleep.

And it is dark, I hear her feet no more,
A red moon leers beyond the lily-tank.
A drunken moon ogling a sycamore,
Running long fingers down its shining
flank.

A lurching moon, as nimble as a clown,
Cuddling the flowers and trees which
burn like glass.
Red, kissing lips, I feel you on my gown —
Kiss me, red lips, and then pass — pass.

Music, you are pitiless to-night.
And I so old, so cold, so languorously
white.

ORIENTATION

When the young ladies of the boarding-
school take the air,
They walk in pairs, each holding a blush-
red parasol against the sun.
From my window they look like an
ambulating parterre
Of roses, I cannot tell one from one.

There is a certain young person I dream
of by night,
And paint by day on little two-by-three
inch squares
Of ivory. Which is she? Which of all
the parasols in sight
Covers the blithe, mocking face which
stares
At me from twenty miniatures, con-
fusing the singleness of my delight?

You know my window well enough —
the fourth from the corner. Oh, you
know.

Slant your parasol a bit this way, if you
please,
And take for yourself the very correct bow
I make toward the line of demure young
ladies

Perambulating the street in a neat row.
It is true I have never seen beneath your
parasol,

Therefore my miniatures resemble one
another not at all.

You must pick yourself like a button-hole
bouquet,

And lift the parasol to my face one day,
And let me see you laughing at the
sun —

Or at me. Then I will choose the one
Of my twenty miniatures most like you
And destroy the others, with which I shall
have nothing more to do.

PANTOMIME IN ONE ACT

Certainly the furniture was of satin-wood,
Painted with a lovely design of straw-
berry flowers and heliotrope,
And the carpet was Aubusson, all pinks
and golds.

On it stood frail chairs, their seats
covered with green and yellow silk,
A striped pattern, continued and broken
in the folds

Of the window-curtains. The clock on
the mantel-piece

Was a gay conceit of porcelain flowers
springing from fantastic sprigs of ormolu,
And in the book-cases that lined the walls,
three book-cases with glass doors and
gilded locks, were volumes bound in
blue.

The smell of clipped box floated in from
the garden outside, and the sound of
a rake

On gravel stirred the silence with an
impression of placid order

Peacefully repeated through a season and
seasons perhaps, but the odour of the
box was an ache

After the same perfection which existed
inevitably in every parterre and border.
Mirrors of a yellow-silver shining topped
the consoles at either end,

Behind twin alabaster vases, and in
tarnished and golden duplicate, a blend
Of fact and potent possibility, the room
stretched dreamily through

Walls that were solid or not as one be-
held them, depending on the point of
view.

Sunlight fell on the satin-wood escri-
toire between the windows,

And on a single Malmaison rose

And the green Ming vase which held it,
Also on a letter, I suppose.

White paper with ink upon it may be
taken for such, I opine.

But the letter, being without superscrip-
tion, could hardly be considered mine.

On the whole, I preferred to leave it
untouched and preserve the nicety of
my honour.

(Positively I thought I heard a giggle
from the lips of the Botticelli Ma-
donna

On the chimney-breast; but that was solely
her affair.)

I was a poltroon maybe, or wise with a
wisdom which haunted the air,

Coquettish reserve, that was it, but brazen
armour could have stayed me less.

Ah, Madame, did I obey your desire, or
possibly disobey it ruthlessly? I confess

I never became aware of your attitude, for
I tiptoed to the door,

And left the room which had caught
your trick of smiling,

Exactly as it was before: a beautiful
entourage, bien entendu,

But to me nothing more.

IN A POWDER CLOSET

EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

My very excellent young person,
Since Fate has destined you to play the
rôle of coiffeur.

You will permit that I admire your quite
unsurpassed skill,

Together with your polished, if a trifle
over-pronounced, manners,

Without by an inch lessening the distance
Which the hazard of birth and the arti-
fice of custom

Have placed between us.

My mirror tells me that you are a per-
sonable man;

But, indeed, it is my own image in this
same mirror
Which most occupies my attention.
That such a subject as I offer
Engages you to put forth your best efforts
Is only natural;
That I should remain indifferent is equally
so.

Be satisfied that the exigencies of your
profession

Admit you to privileges from which a
more exalted station would exclude
you.

My maid will, I am sure, be most happy
to accommodate herself to your wishes.
She is a worthy girl and entertains a not
unjustifiable belief in my continued
recognition of her services.

The spray of heliotrope is well placed.

Do you think a patch just here — at the
corner of the eye?

Ah, yes. It adds perceptibly.

You are, Sir, a consummate artist.

To-morrow at four I shall expect you.

ATTITUDE UNDER AN ELM TREE

Seeing that you pass your life playing
upon the virginals

In an upper chamber with only a slit of
a window in it,

I wonder why I,

Roaming the hills on a charger red as
maple-leaves,

Should find the thought of you attrac-
tive.

You were veiled at the jousting, you re-
member,

Which enables me to imagine you with-
out let or hindrance from the rigidity
of fact;

A condition not unproductive of charm
if viewed philosophically.

Besides, your window gives upon a walled
garden,

Which I can by no means enter without
dismounting from my maple-red charger,
And this I will not do,

Particularly as the garden belongs in-
dubitably to your ancestors.

But I thank you for the spray of myrtle
I have wound about my sleeve.

As it over-topped the wall,

My plucking it was without malice.

ON READING A LINE UNDERScoreD BY KEATS

IN A COPY OF "PALMERIN OF ENGLAND"

You marked it with light pencil upon a
printed page,

And, as though your finger pointed along
a sunny path for my eyes' better
direction,

I see "a knight mounted on a mulberry
courser and attired in green armour."

I think the sky is faintly blue, but with a
Spring shining about it,

And the new grass scarcely fetlock high
in the meads.

He rides, I believe, alongside an over-
flown river,

By a path soft and easy to his charger's
flect.

My vision confuses you with the green-
armoured knight:

So dight and caparisoned might you be in
a land of Faery.

Thus, with denoting finger, you make of
yourself an escutcheon to guide me to
that in you which is its essence.

But for the rest,

The part which most persists and is re-
membered,

I only know I compass it in loving and
neither have, nor need, a symbol.

THE HUMMING-BIRDS

Up — up — water shooting,

Jet of water, white and silver,

Tinkling with the morning sun-bells.

Red as sun-blood, whizz of fire,

Shock of fire-spray and fire.

It is the humming-birds flying against the
stream of the fountain.

The trumpet-vine bursts into a scatter of
humming-birds,

The scarlet-throated trumpet flowers ex-
plode with humming-birds.

The fountain waits to toss them dia-
monds.

I clasp my hands over my heart

Which will not let loose its humming-
birds,

Which will not break to green and ruby,

Which will not let its wings touch air.
Pound and hammer me with irons,

Crack me so that flame can enter,
 Pull me open, loose the thunder
 Of wings within me,
 Leave me wrecked and consoled,
 A maker of humming-birds
 Who dare bathe in a leaping water.

SUMMER NIGHT PIECE

*The garden is steeped in moonlight,
 Full to its high edges with brimming
 silver,
 And the fish-ponds brim and darken
 And run in little serpent lights soon
 extinguished.
 Lily-pads lie upon the surface, beautiful
 as the tarnishings on frail old silver,
 And the Harvest moon droops heavily
 out of the sky,
 A ripe, white melon, intensely, magnifi-
 cently, shining.
 Your window is orange in the moonlight,
 It glows like a lamp behind the branches
 of the old wistaria,
 It burns like a lamp before a shrine,
 The small, intimate, familiar shrine
 Placed reverently among the bricks
 Of a much-loved garden wall.*

WIND AND SILVER

Greatly shining,
 The Autumn moon floats in the thin sky;
 And the fish-ponds shake their backs and
 flash their dragon scales
 As she passes over them

NIGHT CLOUDS

The white mares of the moon rush along
 the sky
 Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass
 Heavens;
 The white mares of the moon are all
 standing on their hind legs
 Pawing at the green porcelain doors of
 the remote Heavens.
 Fly, Mares!
 Strain your utmost,
 Scatter the milky dust of stars,
 Or the tiger sun will leap upon you and
 destroy you
 With one lick of his vermilion tongue.

FUGITIVE

Sunlight,
 Three marigolds,

And a dusky purple poppy-pod —
*Out of these I made a beautiful world.
 Will you have them —*
 Brightness,
 Cold,
 And a sleep with dreams?
 They are brittle pleasures certainly,
 But where can you find better?
 Roses are not noted for endurance,
 And only thirty days are June.

THE SAND ALTAR

With a red grain and a blue grain, placed
 in precisely the proper positions, I
 made a beautiful god, with plumes of
 yard-long feathers and a swivel eye.

And with a red grain and a blue grain,
 placed in precisely the proper posi-
 tions, I made a dragon, with scaly
 wings and a curling, iniquitous tail.

Then I reflected:

If, with the same materials, I can make
 both god and dragon, of what use is
 the higher mathematics?

Having said this, I went outdoors and
 stood under a tree and listened to the
frogs singing their evening songs in
 the green darkness.

TIME-WEB

The day is sharp and hurried
 As wind upon a dahlia stem;
 It is harsh and abrupt with me
 As a North-east breeze
 Striking a bed of sunflowers.
 Why should I break at the root
 And cast all my fragile flowers in the
 dust —
 I who am no taller than a creeping pansy?
 I should be sturdy and definite.
 Yet am I tossed, and agitated, and prag-
 matically bending.

PREFACE TO AN OCCASION

How witless to assail the carven halls
 Of memory! To climb the high stone
 steps,
 Picking a foothold through the crisp, dry
 leaves

Whirled in the corners, crunching under
 foot
 'Those scattered in the centre, to clap at
 doors
 With battered hauberk, till some seneschal,
 Drowsy with age and oversleeping, creaks
 Them open an inhospitable inch,
 And, grumbling, lets himself be pushed
 aside
 By a determined entrance! Where's the
 sense
 Of striding by tarnished furniture from
 one
 Mournful deserted chamber to another,
 Seeking for roses in a vase of dust,
 For tapestries where rusty armour hangs,
 For blithe allurement under spider-spun
 Ceilings corroded to a dripping ash?
What can you find here? A little powdered dust
 To pinch up with your finger and your
 thumb
 And fasten in a knotted handkerchief!
 Look from the window, Friend, the sky
 is blue,
 The leafless trees blow to a merry wind,
 Your horse is tethered at the stairway's
 foot,
 He twitches at the skipping of the leaves.
 Pocket your handkerchief and ride away.
 Was the trip worth while? I'll wager
guinea gold
 Within a week you'll wish you had not
 come,
 And send your handkerchief knotted to
 the wash.
 Life's the great cynic, and there's an end
 of that.

PRIMAVERA

Spring has arrived.
 It is no use your telling me to look at
 the calendar,
 And saying that it is five good days to
 the twenty-first of March.
 Is the year bound to obey the almanac-
 makers?
 O model of all egregious pedants!
 Would you shackle Spring to times and
 seasons,
 And catch her back by her long green
 skirt
 Till the moment you have planned for
 her?

She has stolen a march this year, for
 certain.
 To-day, at sunrise, I saw a white-breasted
nut-hatch
 Running up the branch of the oak-tree
 That was so broken by the ice-storm last
 December,
 And in the garden a pheasant was picking
 grains
 Out of the manure covering the garden-
 beds.
 There is a snowdrop up by the porch,
 Shot clean through the tulip-straw;
 And the crows are all agog over my
 neighbour's pine-trees.
 It is a game of catch-who-catch-can with
 that green skirt then.
 Even though, in your passion for order,
you bring about a snow storm to-
morrow,
 It will not matter to me.
 This morning, beyond the shadow of a
 doubt, I saw the Spring.

KATYDIDS

SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN

Katydids scraped in the dim trees,
 And I thought they were little white
 skeletons
 Playing the fiddle with a pair of finger-
 bones.

How long is it since Indians walked here,
 Stealing along the sands with smooth
 feet?
 How long is it since Indians died here
 And the creeping sands scraped them
 bone from bone?
 Dead Indians under the sands, playing
 their bones against strings of wampum.
 The roots of new, young trees have torn
 their graves asunder,
 But in the branches sit little white
 skeletons
 Rasping a bitter death-dirge through the
 August night.

TO CARL SANDBURG

I think I am cousin-german to Endy-
 mion,
 Certainly I have loved the moon a long
 time.

I have seen her, a faint conceit of silver,
Shooting little silver arrows into a marsh
pool at twilight.
I have seen her, high, round, majestic,
Making herself a jewel of fire out of a
sea bay.
I have seen the morning moon, grievously
battered,
Limping down a coloured sky.
To-night I saw an evening moon
Dodging between tree-branches
Through a singing silence of crickets,
And a man was singing songs to a black-
backed guitar.

To-day I saw a country I knew well but
had never seen.
A country where corn runs a mile or
more to a tree-line,
A country where a river, brown as bronze,
streaked green with the flowing heads
of water-plants,
Slips between a field of apples and a
field of wheat.
A country where the eye seeks a long
way
And comes back on the curve of a round
sky,
Satisfied with greens and blues, tired
with the stretch and exhilarated by it.

The moon stops a moment in a hole
between leaves
And tells me a new story,
The story of a man who lives in a house
with a pear-tree before the door,
A story of little green pears changing and
ripening,
Of long catalpa pods turning yellow
through September days.
There is a woman in the house, and
children,
And, out beyond, the corn-fields are
sleeping and the trees are whispering to
the fire-flies.
So I have seen the man's country, and
heard his songs before there are
words to them.
And the moon said to me: "This now I
give you," and went on, stepping
through the leaves.
And the man went on singing, picking
out his accompaniment softly on the
black-backed guitar.

IF I WERE
FRANCESCO GUARDI

I

I think you are a white clematis
Climbing the wall of a seaside garden.
When there is a green haze on the water
And a boy is eating a melon in a boat
with a brown sail.

II

I think you are the silver heart of a great
square,
Holding little people like glass beads,
Watching them parade — parade — and
gather,
When the sun slips to an opposite angle.
And a thunder of church bells lies like
a bronze roof beneath the sky.

ELEONORA DUSE

I

Seeing's believing, so the ancient word
Chills buds to shrivelled powder flecks,
turns flax
To smoky heaps of straw whose small
flames wax
Only to gasp and die. The thing's absurd!
Have blind men ever seen or deaf men
heard?
What one beholds but measures what
one lacks,
Where is the prism to draw gold from
blacks,
Or flash the iris colours of a bird?
Not in the eye, be sure, nor in the ear,
Nor in an instrument of twisted glass,
Yet there are sights I see and sounds I
hear
Which ripple me like water as they pass.
This that I give you for a dear love's sake
Is curling noise of waves marching along
a lake.

II

A letter or a poem — the words are set
To either tune. Be careful how you slice
The flap which is held down by this
device
Impressed upon it. In one moment met
A cameo, intaglio, a fret

Of workmanship, and I. Like melted ice
 I took the form and froze so, turned
 precise
 And brittle seal, a creed in silhouette.
 Seeing's believing? What then would you
 see?
 A chamfered dragon? Three spear-heads
 of steel?
 A motto done in flowered charactry?
 The thin outline of Mercury's winged
 heel?
 Look closer, do you see a name, a face,
 Or just a cloud dropped down before a
 holy place?

III

Lady, to whose enchantment I took shape
 So long ago, though carved to your grace,
 Bearing, like quickened wood, your sweet
 sad face
 Cut in my flesh, yet may I not escape
 My limitations: words that jibe and gape
 After your loveliness and make grimace
 And travesty where they should interlace
 The weave of sun-spun ocean round a
 cape.
 Pictures then must contain you, this and
 more,
 The sigh of wind floating on ripe June
 hay,
 The desolate pulse of snow beyond a
 door,
 The grief of mornings seen as yesterday.
 All that you are mingles as one sole cry
 To point a world aright which is so
 much awry.

IV

If Beauty set her image on a stage
 And bid it mirror moments so intense
 With passion and swift largess of the
 sense
 To a divine exactness, stamp a page
 With mottoes of hot blood, and dis-
 engage
 No atom of mankind's experience,
 But lay the soul's complete incontinence
 Bare while it tills grief's gusty acreage.
 Doing this, you, spon-image to her needs,
 She picked to pierce, reveal, and soothe
 again,
 Shattering by means of you the tinsel
 creeds

Offered as meat to the pinched hearts of
 men.

So, sacrificing you, she fed those others
 Who bless you in their prayers even
 before their mothers.

V

Life seized you with her iron hands and
 shook
 The fire of your boundless burning out
 To fall on us, poor little ragged rout
 Of common men, till like a flaming
 book
 We, letters of a message, flashed and
 took
 The fiery flare of prophecy, devout
 Torches to bear your oil, a dazzling
 shout,
 The liquid golden running of a brook
 Who, being upborne on racing streams of
 light,
 Seeing new heavens sprung from dusty
 hells.
 Considered you, and what might be your
 plight,
 Robbed, plundered — since Life's cruel
 plan compels
 The perfect sacrifice of one great soul
 To make a myriad others even a whit
 more whole.

VI

Seeing you stand once more before my
 eyes
 In ~~your~~ pale dignity and tenderness,
 Wearing your frailty like a misty dress
 Draped over the great glamour which
 denies
 To years their domination, all disguise
 Time can achieve is but to add a
 stress,
 A finer fineness, as though some caress
 Touched you a moment to a strange sur-
 prise.
 Seeing you after these long lengths of
 years,
 I only know the glory come again,
 A majesty bewildered by my tears,
 A golden sun spangling slant shafts of
 rain,
 Moonlight delaying by a sick man's bed,
 A rush of daffodils where wastes of dried
 leaves spread.

EAST WIND

THE DOLL

You know, my Dear, I have a way, each
Summer
When leaves have changed from ecstasies
in green
To something like a crowd with raised
umbrellas
Pushing for places at a theatre door,
Whenever there's a reasonable wind —
And when there isn't, why I think it's
worse,
They droop so underneath the copper
sun
Sitting upon them like a metal cover;
I think the trees look positively tired
Holding the mass of them up all the
time.
Well, as I say, when every breeze is
smothered
By heavy, lagging leaves on dusty trees,
And all I smell is asphalt and hot tar,
And motor horns destroy the moonlight
nights,
I pack myself, and some stray sheets of
music,
Into a train and hie me to South Norton.
I came from there, and little drowsy town
Although it is, I still go back (or used to)
And find it with a narrow odd content-
ment
As grey and glistening as it always was,
Some of it painted, some a silver shim-
mer
Of weathered clapboards melting to decay.
There always is a blaze of Summer flowers
Cramming the dooryards — stocks and
portulaca,
And golden glow above the first floor
windows,
And China asters mixed with marigolds.
White paint looks very well indeed be-
hind them
And green blinds, always down, you
understand,
South Norton people will not risk the
daylight
Upon their best room furniture, and
really

When you possess an inland teak-wood
table,
With mother-of-pearl and ebony in squares,
And on it, set precisely in their order,
Stand ivory chessmen, red and white,
the queens
A pair of ancient Maharajas copied
To every quaintness of their grand attire
And not a button on embroidery
Skipped by the Hindu carver; when your
chairs
Are waxed as never chair is waxed to day,
And there are corners lit by golden silks,
And mandarin fruit dishes in high glass
cupboards,
Perhaps you may at least be half forgiven
For only opening the room for weddings,
Or when some guest from Boston comes
to call.
I have called often in such drawing-
rooms,
Confused at first by coming from the
dazzle
Of a white August sea, and almost
groping
To find my hostess in the green blind
dusk,
While all the time my nose was being
grateful
For the great puffs of pot pourri and
cloves,
The gusts of myrrh, and sandalwood,
and ginger
Invisibly progressing up and down
These scented rooms are just a paraphrase
Of something penetrating, but never clear,
Never completely taken nor rejected,
Unrealized hobsan of the hides of trade,
And these trail, ancient Indies are like
ten-dust
Left in the bottom of a painted chest,
Poor fluttering souls, surrounded by their
"things,"
Oblivious of the sea which brought them
here
My Dear, I prose, you really must not
let me,
For after all I have something to say.
I never make these duty calls until

My music lessons are a week away
 And each day's mail is stuffed with
 pupils' letters
 Asking for dates and prices then I go
 The rounds and drink a dish of tea with
 each
 Old fragile chrysalis and so come home
 For many years I've always ended up
 With the two Misses Perkins They were
 a whiff
 Of eighteen forty and I rather liked
 To talk to them and then come back and
 play
 Debussy, and think God I had read
 I read,
 The contrast was as genial as curry
 I only wish that I could make you see
 them,
 Their garden path with spice bushes and
 lilacs,
 The scraper by the door, the polished
 knocker,
 And then the hall with the model of a
 clipper
 Upon a table in a square glass case
 She is a replica of the "Flying Dolphin"
 And Captain Perkins made her on a
 voyage
 Of eighteen months to China and Ceylon,
 Miss Julia just remembers when he
 brought
 The model home and put it where it
 stands
 I always laid my gloves upon the table
 Just by the clipper's stern, and stood my
 sunshade
 Against the corner, and tiptoed up the
 stairs
 Miss Perkins was an invalid, for years
 She had not left her bed, so I was sum-
 moned
 Up slippery stairs and over cool, long
 matting
 Into her room, and there in a great four
 poster
 The little lady would greet me with
 effusion
 "Clara, Dear, how good of you to come,
 Julia and I were wondering if you would
 You'll have a cake and a small glass of
 sherry
 Hannah will bring them in directly Now
 How is the music getting on? To think
 You play at concerts! Julia and I read
 About your triumphs in the newspapers"

And all the time, behind the house, the
 sea
 Was moving — moving — with a long
 slow sound
 I could not hear it, but I clung to it,
 For naturally this room looked on the
 street
 It was a pretty room with bright glazed
 chintz,
 And Naples bay in staring blue gouache
 Flanked by Vesuvius at night, both pic-
 tures framed
 In peeling gold Upon the mantelpiece
 Were silhouettes the Captain and his
 wife,
 Miss Perkins and Miss Julia in pantalettes
 A China bear for matches, and a clock
 Suspended between alabaster pillars
 But what I never could keep long from
 seeing
 Was a large wax doll, dressed in the Paris
 fashion
 Of sixty years ago, with a lace tippet
 And much flounced skirt over a coroluc,
 Upright in a winged arm chair by the bed
 She sat and gazed with an uncanny ardour
 Straight at the andiron, her hands palms
 upward,
 Her feet in heelless slippers wide apart
 She fascinated me Those blue glass eyes
 Had an unearthly meaning, staring straight
 Before her in her faded finery
 I had to draw a chair up from the wall,
 For never did Miss Perkins or Miss Julia
 Suggest that I should sit in the winged
 chair
 I found my mind all drawn upon a focus,
 I thought wax doll and very nearly said
 so,
 And I am very much afraid I missed the
 point
 Of one or two quite artless little sillies
 They never said a word, and I with rigour
 Suppressed my curiosity and merely lis-
 tened
 With sometimes half a mind and some-
 times none
 I drank the sherry and I eat the cake,
 I kissed Miss Perkins when I came to go,
 Bending over the bed, my skirt just
 touching
 The doll, I think, and then the call was
 over
 Of course at first the thing made no
 impression

I thought they had been clearing out the
attic
And come upon the doll; but when each
year
She was still sitting there, I grew to
dread
Encountering her, she seemed so full of
tales,
Tell-tales of maiden ladies left alone
With still things on the walls and mantle-
pieces
And nothing moving round them but the
sea
Kept out of reach beyond the matted
entry.
One year, in early April, coming in
All flushed with having played Mous-
sorgski's "Pictures"
To an enthusiastic audience,
I found a black-edged letter on my table,
Miss Julia writing that "Dear Sister Jane
Had passed away, she wanted me to
know."
The words were quaintly quiet and re-
signed,
The slim and pointed writing very calm,
But still there seemed a wistful hint of
dread.
I knew, in fact, Miss Julia was alone.
I wrote — oh, what one always writes,
the things
One does not think, and does not want
to think.
I sent the letter, and the answer came
As slim, and pointed, and reticent as
ever.
And that was all until I reached South
Norton.
Of course I went at once to see Miss
Julia.
She greeted me beside the clipper-ship,
And there was something grim about that
vessel
Placidly sailing on its painted waves
With coffins passing through the door
beside it,
From time to time, while nothing ever
came.
I wondered what would be its fate, some
junk-shop
Probably, when Miss Julia too had gone.
Poor soul, she seemed to flicker with
excitement
And sorrow all in one. The great im-
portance

Of doing something which was not com-
manded
Appeared in vague authoritative gestures
Which seemed but half controlled and
faded off
Into a quiver of movement so pathetic
It made me want to cry. She begged
me
To go upstairs. "I cannot bear to be
in any other room but Jane's," she told
me.
"I've sat there so much with her, quite
ten years.
It was she did not leave it." So we
mounted
The broad old stairs, and softly trod the
matting,
Walking gently as in a house of mourning.
I was resentful, it was four full months
Since I had got that lonely little letter.
Was this a mausoleum? Was Miss Julia
To find her only company with ghosts?
The gaudy paper of the narrow hallway,
Flashing its minarets to a sapphire Heaven
Seemed to be mocking us with Eastern
splendour,
With Eastern customs and an Eastern
languor.
The conch shells roared a siren song of
oceans,
Flanking the newel posts, as we passed
by them.
Miss Jane's room was a lovely blaze of
sunlight,
The empty bed was orderly and sane,
The Bay of Naples gladdened without
hurting.
I shook myself free of the swarming still-
ness
And saw with satisfaction that the chair,
The doll chair, had been moved, it stood
beside
The window with its back toward the
room.
Why did I walk up to it? I don't know.
Some feeling that the usualness of streets
Comes kindly over a long spent emotion
Perhaps. At any rate, I did so, saying
How bright and gay the portulacas were,
Or something of the sort. And then I
started
To sit down in the chair and saw the
doll
With palms stretched out and little slip-
pered feet

Pointing before her. There she sat, her
 eyes
 Fixed glassily upon the window-pane.
 I may have jumped, at any rate Miss
 Julia
 Flushing a painful pink said steadily:
 "It was so dull for her after Jane died,
 I moved her here where she could see the
 street.
 It's very comforting to watch the passing,
 I think. I always find it so." That's all,
 I don't know how the visit went, nor
 what
 I said, nor where I sat. I only know
 I took the train that evening back to
 town
 And stayed up half the night playing
 Stravinsky.
 I dreamt wax doll for three weeks after-
 wards,
 And I shall go to London this vacation.

THE HOUSE IN MAIN STREET

You want I should tell yer 'bont old
 James Boott, do yer, boys?
 Well, 'tain't much of a story, I guess,
 But I ain't never fergot it.
 Hitch yer cheer up t' th' stove, Sam.
 And, 'Lige, you fetch that cracker-box out
 o' th' corner,
 Two o' you can set on that.
 Now jest wait a mite till I git my pipe
 a-drawin'—
 Ther!
 Well, you know I warn't raised here,
 My father didn't hold with farmin'.
 He was a carpenter over to Pelham,
 An' I was a real town boy all my growin'
 up.
 Only Pelham warn't near th' city 'tis now.
 It set in th' middle o' a great space o'
 fields
 An' I couldn't never ha' done with run-
 nin' over 'em.
 I'd hire out with th' farmers fer Satur-
 day afternoons,
 An' I never was so happy as when I was
 hoein' beans,
 Or pitchin' hay,
 Or beatin' a tin pan when a beehive
 swarmed.
 I can see th' critters now,
 Black, an' gold, an' buzzin'.
 'They was like sparks from a pin-wheel,

All scatterin' up in th' sunlight,
 An' th' great trees bendin' over 'em like
 butterfly nets.
 No, I couldn't relish carpenterin',
 An' when th' time come fer me to fix
 on a trade
 I went to farmin';
 An' I been at it fifty year now,
 Fifty year o' freeze, an' thaw, an' drought.
 Well! Well! 'Tain't no bed o' cider.
 down, farmin' ain't,
 An' that's th' Lord's truth.
 Now don't you worrit me, Sam,
 I'll git to James Boott presently.
 When we old fellers once starts in re-
 memberin',
 Ther' ain't no beginnin' nor end, I guess.

James Boott was a fine man to look at,
 Bearin' his years right smart,
 Only fer a stoop he had,
 An' a lameness th' rheumatiz settled on
 him.

But he was queer as Dick's hat-band.
 He come by it straight 'nough;
 One o' his brothers shot himself,
 An' t' other died in th' 'sylum,
 But old James warn't really mad,
 He was jest diff'rent.
 He had a mint o' money,
 All his own an' what his brothers lef'
 him,
 But for all that he boarded in a couple
 o' rooms to Parson Tole's.
 He could ha' bought half th' town
 Ef he'd been so minded,
 As 'twas he owned a house,
 An' I do think 'twas th' prettiest house I
 ever see.

It stood right up in th' main street,
 With th' Common jest acrost th' road;
 Th' Court House cornered it one end,
 An' Parson Tole's church, with th' new
 spire peekin' over th' barberry hedge,
 Was on th' South side.
 'Twas a mighty fine house,
 An' tidy warn't th' word fer th' way
 James Boott kep' it.
 He had th' box borders either side th'
 stone path to th' front door
 As flat an' square as a plate.
 An' my, but th' hollyhocks he had under
 th' winders!
 They was as big an' bright es ef they was
 stamped chintz

An' not jest wood an' sap.
 Nobody ever see 'em fade.
 One day they was ther'
 An' th' next day they warn't,
 An' that was all ther' was to it.
 'Twas th' same way with all th' flowers,
 Pansies, an' gillyflowers, an' snapdragons,
 Nobody ever could pint out a faded
 flower
 In James Boott's yard.
 It costs a sight o' money
 To keep things redded up that way,
 But James had th' money,
 An' his yard showed it.
 Why, even th' laylocks warn't let ripen;
 I never see nothin' like it.
 Seemed es ef th' place was painted on
 cardboard
 An' held to th' drawin'.
 He was pertic'lar 'bout th' house-paintin'
 too,
 He couldn't never abide no blisters
 An' 'twas all burnt down to th' bare
 wood
 Every time it needed a new coat.
 That paintin' brought it out elegant;
 Ther' was th' pilasters, an' th' twisted
 tops o' th' pillars,
 As spick an' span as washed ivory.
 But th' blinds was al'ays shut,
 An' that made th' house seem kind o'
 lonesome
 Spite o' th' grand bloomin' o' th' flowers.
 I guess 'twas a little nute sad fer him
 too.
 Folks said he'd bought it to marry
 on,
 An' then he never did marry.
 But ther' set th' house,
 Starin' at him with its white paint
 An' sort o' pintin' back'ards.
 I guess when he bought it, it told him
 "Bimeby, Bimeby," all th' time,
 But afterwards it fairly hollered, "'Too
 late!'"
 It stood like a lady all 'dizened up fer
 a party
 An' carryin' a bouquet,
 But when you come to look at her, she
 was blind.
 I mind I used to think 'twas awful creepy
 When th' moon dazzled it of a June
 evenin'.
 An' th' flowers was noddin', and' jostlin',
 An' whisperin'.

I used to commence runnin' at th' Court
 House
 An' keep on clear past th' church
 When I had to pass it.
 An' that was queer too,
 Fer Joseph Peters, th' hired man,
 Lived in th' back part,
 An' I'd go in once in a while with young
 Joe
 An' git a ginger-cookie.
 Mrs. Peters liked us to come in.
 Maybe she felt lonesome with that great,
 empty, echoin' house
 Behind her.
 Yet see, boys,
 The kitchen part give on a lauc
 So we didn't have to go through the yard
 at all.
 Even Joe didn't care about th' frount after
 sunset.
 'Twas like two houses,
 One livin' an' one dead,
 An' th' dead house meant th' most, I
 guess.

I was goin' on fer twelve year old
 When a new doctor come to Pelham.
 He'd had hospital trainin' down to Boston,
 An' only fer his havin' a weak heart
 He'd never ha' left th' city.
 'Twas a fine thing fer Pelham to git him.
 He was full o' notions 'bout sprains an'
 fevers,
 An' one o' them was that th' old doc-
 tor's house was a pesky little place
 Fer th' likes o' him.
 He must have somethin' better.
 Well, boys, you know how 'tis.
 Most o' th' houses was lived in a'ready,
 So Doctor Busby he peered roon' and
 roon'
 But couldn't hit on a place to suit him
 'Ceptin' James Boott's house,
 An' that he fixed his mind to
 'Till ther' warn't no movin' him.
 Folks told him 'twouldn't do,
 That James wouldn't sell,
 But he only said, "'Tut! Tut! We'll see,'"
 And walked off down th' street, steppin'
 out real jaunty
 In a way he had.

One day I was shootin' marbles all alone,
 Playin' one hand ag'in t'other,
 In th' drive by th' Court House,

When I seed 'em comin'.
 Doctor Busby was hustlin' 'long with his
 big stride,
 An' James Boott was creepin' toward him
 Tappin' th' flags with his malacca stick.
 I guess 'twas th' tappin' o' th' stick
 Made me look up.
 They stopped jost opposite th' white
 house
 An' I thought it 'peared brighter'n usual
 With th' big, shiny clouds blowin' over
 th' chimnies.
 "Good-mornin', Mr. Boott," says Doctor
 Busby.
 "Good-mornin', Doctor," says James.
 An' 'twas jost like a little fife
 Answerin' a big bass drum.
 Well, th' doctor started right in sayin'
 he wanted to buy th' house.
 And James listened to him,
 Leanin' on his stick, an' sort o' quiverin'.
 Leastways I thought he quivered,
 But maybe 'twas only th' shadows o' th'
 leaves from th' great elm-tree
 Dancin' on his shoulders.
 "Th' house ain't fer sale," says James,
 Short and quick.
 "But you don't live in it," persisted th'
 doctor.
 "My hired man does," snapped James,
 An' jerked up as though fer walkin' on.
 "But, my dear sir," the doctor was al'ays
 polite
 Even when he was drawin' a tooth,
 "Surely you ain't a-goin' to keep a val-
 uable house empty
 Jest fer th' sake o' your servant?"
 Now that's what all Pelham had been
 saying fer years
 But nobody hadn't never durst say it to
 James afore.
 "That, Doctor Busby, is my affair," the
 old man lashed out,
 An' I declare he was stan'in' up as straight
 as a new willer shoot,
 An' gimletin' his eyes right into th' doc-
 tor.
 I cal'late Doctor Busby thought he'd gone
 too fer,
 Fer he started praisin' th' hollyhocks an'
 dahlias,
 An' after a while he got round to th' way
 th' house was built,
 An' kep' a-speakin' o' Doric columns, an'
 th' fan-light over th' door,

An' a heap o' things I couldn't under-
 stan'.
 I could see th' old gentleman was pleased,
 But when th' doctor come to money
 He shied like a colt
 An' turned off on to somethin' else quick
 as a flash.
 I declare I felt es ef I was to a badger-
 baitin'.
 The doctor he up an' at it ag'in and ag'in,
 But James give him the slip every time.
 An' all th' while th' little shadows kep'
 bobb'in' over 'em,
 An' th' great clouds breezin' above.
 I call to mind I watched 'em
 An' tried to figger out how many men
 like them two
 Could stand on one of 'em.
 Boys do have queer fancies sometimes.
 Well, the long an' th' short o' it was
 That th' doctor didn't git ahead a mite.
 It made me chuckle
 To think o' that old man, teeterin' on
 his cane
 An' not able to take a step without it,
 Jest blockin' th' way fer that great big
 doctor.
 In th' end he give over an' 'lowed he
 was beaten.
 "I see you won't sell," says he,
 "But maybe at least you'll let me see th'
 inside o' that beautiful house, Mr.
 Boott."
 I 'most squealed at that;
 I'd 'bout come to believin' ther' warn't
 no inside.
 Old James he stroked his chin.
 "It's a handsome house,
 A handsome house, doctor,
 But I ain't kep' it up inside," he says.
 That fair riled me,
 Not kep' up th' inside,
 With all th' outside fixed like a parlour!
 But th' doctor didn't seem to care.
 He said the woodwork would be ther'
 An' th' chimbley-pieces.
 "Twarn't woodwork an' chimbley-pieces
 I was set on,
 But my ears was fit to bust listenin', jest
 th' same.
 I wondered would James hit him with
 his cane,
 Or would he take him into th' Court
 House
 An' have th' law on him fer trespassin'.

But he didn't do neither.
 He jest turned a sort o' dark pink
 All over his wrinkled face,
 An' then he said, hollow-like,
 "Very well, Doctor Busby,
 I will take you into th' house.
 Would four o'clock on 'Thursday after-
 noon suit you?"
 The doctor said 'twould,
 An' then they parted.
 I heer'd th' tappin' o' that malaccor cane
 Fer three good minutes after th' doctor's
 steps
 Had stopped soundin' in th' other direc-
 tion.

I guess 'Thursday was awful long a-comin'
 ter me,
 Fer, you understan', I'd made my mind
 up
 To see th' house too.
 So I sized up that yard
 Same as though I was huntin' fer a jack-
 knife I'd lost.
 I squatted behind th' flower beds
 An' squeezed under th' bushes.
 An' when four o'clock 'Thursday come
 I was ther';
 But I guess 'twould ha' taken more'n old
 James Boott's eyes ter see me
 Even with his spectacles on.
 I can't tell you how I felt when I heer'd
 th' key
 Strikin' on th' lock.
 I couldn't see nothin' where I was hidin',
 But I'd heer'd th' malaccor cane a-comin'
 Way down th' road,
 An' I was ready.
 I declare I git gooseflesh now,
 Jes rememberin' th' awful moan th' door
 give
 When James pushed it open.
 'Twas like a livin' thing cryin' out,
 An' somethin' come rushin' out o' that
 door too,
 Damp an' musty,
 An' ther' warn't nothin' at all.
 'Twas mortal hard fer me to git up and
 go in,
 But I did.
 They was ahead o' me,
 I could hear 'em talkin' in one o' th'
 rooms.
 Oh, Lor! How queer that house was!
 'Twas August,

But that hall was so cold my teeth chat-
 tered,
 An' th' floor felt funny.
 'Twas like walkin' on velvet,
 An' th' softness give me a dret'ful start.
 You see I was barefoot,
 An' th' dust was so thick
 It oozed up between my toes
 An' sucked me down,
 The way snow does.
 'Twas dark too,
 'Count o' th' shut blinds,
 Didn't seem like th' same world was out-
 side.
 I looked out o' th' door,
 An' th' glassy green o' th' box hedges,
 An' th' swingin' chains o' th' Common
 fence beyond,
 Helped me some,
 They looked so nat'ral.
 Bimeby I got used to it bein' so dim in
 ther'
 An' I could see th' steps they'd made in
 th' dust.
 An' th' little round plop where th'
 malaccor cane had set.
 So I follered,
 Makin' no noise
 'Cause o' my bare feet.

Oh, it was a house!
 Ther' was carvin's everywher',
 Flowers an' vines all runnin' an' blowin',
 Ther' was a whole orchard over th'
 chimblies,
 But th' paint was all peelin' off
 An' th' dust choked th' ribs o' th' pillars
 till they was pretty near smooth.
 Ther' was a great glass chandelier in
 every room
 Hangin' so still.
 They didn't shine much,
 But they did a little.
 An' that shinin' was so empty an' cold,
 I had to go under 'em without lookin'.
 'Twas es ef they hadn't had nothin' to
 reflect
 Fer so many years
 They was makin' up time by reflectin' me
 double.
 Not that I seed anythin',
 I jest sensed it.
 Halfway up th' stairs was a great standin'
 glass,
 A mirror, I think they call it.

It didn't show what was in front of it
 Bein' all run as 'twere,
 An' yet I seemed to see things movin'
 through it.
 When I looked, they wern't ther',
 An' when I didn't look, they war.
 It kep' me on th' stairs a terr'ble time,
 An' I had to rec'lect George Washington
 real hard
 To git by at all.
 When I got up to th' first floor,
 I heerd James Boott an' th' doctor
 In a room over th' front porch,
 So I crep' over an' pecked thru th' crack
 o' th' door.
 I don't know what I seed,
 Nothin' at first, I guess,
 Fer th' blue light from th' blinds didn't
 make fer seein',
 But, Gosh! What I smelled!
 Apples, boys!
 Apples!
 They was so sweet an' strong
 I thought I'd ha' dropped with th' sur-
 prise o' it.
 They did make my mouth water.
 Then I heerd th' doctor say:
 "Why, Mr. Boott, what are you doing
 with all these apples on th' mantel-
 piece?"
 An' old Boott's voice, like a cracked
 fiddle, answerin':
 "I find this an excellent place to ripen
 apples, Dr. Busby."
 "Do you mean to tell me you keep this
 house to ripen a few dozen apples
 in?"
 That voice did me good,
 An' I braced up an' stared into th' blue
 room
 An' there was old James fingerin' his
 apples
 With a queer, scared look on his face.
 He was pattin' 'em,
 An' cossetin' 'em,
 I don't know why, but it made me shiver
 to see him.
 He picked up a red Bald'in
 An' sniffed it,
 An' his eyes looked narrer an' greedy.
 "I like apples," he said.
 Then I give a awful jump
 For th' malaccor cane fell down on th'
 floor with a clatter.
 I guess I pushed th' door some, too,

'Cause I seem to remember standin' up
 ther' in th' doorway
 Lookin' straight at 'em.
 But they didn't see me.
 The doctor started forward an' grabbed
 th' old man's arm.
 "You poor soul!" he said.
 That was all,
 An' it didn't seem much,
 But James Boott jest crumpled up
 An' would ha' fell only fer th' doctor's
 holdin' him.
 Somethin' seemed to claw out o' his
 throat.
 I suppose 'twas a sob,
 But it sounded like some critter inside
 fightin' loose.
 It echoed an' echoed 'bout that room
 An' set th' chandelier jigglin';
 It seemed everywher',
 Back an' front,
 An' when I turned roun',
 Ther' was somethin' wigglin' in th' big
 mirror, fer sartin'.
 I guess now 'twas th' reflection
 O' th' movin' chandelier,
 But I didn't think so then.
 Anyhow, I jumped down them stairs
 Quicker'n winkin',
 An' I out into th' yard
 An' run till I was in bed in my own room.
 My mother thought I had a chill
 But I knowed diff'rent.
 I knowed a lot,
 But I never found out what 'twas I really
 knowed.
 Fer nothin' happened.
 James Boott lived a couple o' years after
 that
 An' when he died Doctor Busby bought
 th' house,
 An' his daughter was livin' in it when I
 was last to Pelham.
 'Twarn't much, was it?
 An' yet I don't know —
 I ain't never forgot it.

ONE WINTER NIGHT

"Have another cruller, Mis' Sanders.
 You ain't eat nothin'."

"They're proper good, Mis' Bixby,
 But Em'ly comin' down sick all of a sud-
 din like that

Has took all th' relish out o' me.
 I can't git a morsel down my throat.
 My own brother's child, you know.
 It ain't in th' fam'ly, Mis' Bixby.
 We never had no spasms on our side.
 'Course I ain't so sure 'bout her mother's
 people,
 But I never heer'd o' nothin'.
 I wish th' doctor'd come.
 Waitin's awful tryin'."

"Guess he'll be right along now.
 Len took his sorrel mare,
 An' th' roads is beat down fine fer
 sleighin'."

"Do you think she really saw anythin',
 Mis' Bixby?"

"Laws, no! Ther' wa'n't nothin' to see."

"I dunno, o' course. I was up to my
 room,
 Spickin' up my new bunnit fer meetin'
 termorrer,
 When I heerd her scream.
 I'm all shook up with th' sound of it;
 I can't git it out o' my head.
 Jest what was it happened, Mis' Bixby?
 You was here, wasn't you?"

"Yes, I was here; but I wa'n't ther' —
 down cellar, I mean.
 I heerd th' scream, too,
 But 'fore I could git out o' th' rocker
 She come stumblin' up th' cellar stairs
 White as a dish-cloth.
 'He's ther'!' she says,
 'He popped right out o' a apple-barrel
 An' made faces at me.'
 'Then down she goes on th' floor in a
 faint."

"Maybe 'twas one o' th' neighbors playin'
 tricks."

"'Deed no, Mis' Sanders.
 Nobody'd durst play any such a trick on
 Em'ly.
 Why't be murder.
 She's most died o' these takin's a couple
 o' times."

"'Th' poor child! She never give so much
 as a hint in her letters.
 An' me her father's own sister,

An' th' only blood relation she has in
 th' world, too.
 I do wish that doctor'd come."

"Now don't you fret.
 He'll be right along.
 An' Susan Ellen understands her real
 well.
 But as to anythin' she might ha' seed,
 She couldn't.
 Why them barrels is clock full to th'
 brim,
 An' shove so close ther' ain't 'nough room
 between 'em for a rat to pass 'thout
 gnawin'.
 It's jest took her ag'in, that's all.
 I'm afeerd they'll have to put her away
 One o' these days."

"Has she been took often?"

"Five or six times. I guess.
 Le' me see:
 Ther' was th' Post Office.
 She 'lowed she'd seed Si throw up a
 winder over th' shop.
 She said he leaned out so fer he'd ha' fell
 Only fer th' sill ketchin' him at th' waist
 An' keepin' him dancin'.
 'Twas 'nough to scare th' life out o' ye
 T' hear her tell th' way he looked.
 Mr. Jones was real kind.
 He searched th' whole house himself.
 But ther' wa'n't nobody ther'
 'Cept Mrs. Jones and th' hired girl.
 Then once when she was over to Stone-
 ham,
 Buyin' some 'lastic,
 She went right over in a faint on th'
 counter,
 An' when she come to,
 She said 'twas Si was sellin' it to her.
 'Course it wa'n't.
 Why th' young man that 'tended her
 was right ther',
 An' he didn't look no more like Si
 Than I look like Drake's red bull.
 He was ten years younger, fer one thing.
 That's twice't I remember.
 Then ther' was th' time in th' clo'es-yard,
 And another in th' cars comin' from
 Boston.
 Ther's been a good many,
 First an' last."

"Was she an' Si happy?"

"Happy as cranberries, I should say.
'Course Si was a kind o' quiet feller,
An' Em'ly's al'ays been smart and lively.
But they hit it off nicely
'Spote o' th' diff'rence in disposition."

"I s'pose ther' ain't no doubt he's dead?"

"Doubt! 'Course ther' ain't no doubt.
Why th' man was drowned.
Len was with him when't happened."

"You don't say!"

"Oh, yes! Len was ther'.
Not that he seen it happen 'xactly.
'Twas this way.
They was cuttin' ice up to Breed's pond
That Winter.
All th' boys was at it,
But that night they'd all gone home
'Cept Len an' Si.
Them two was ambitious,
An' they was sort o' racin' each other
with th' cuttin',
So they kep' on by lantern light
After th' others left.
Well, bimeby it got near supper time,
An' Len figgered he'd better be gettin'
home.
So he hollered to Si,
An' started loadin' his things into th'
sleigh.
Si didn't answer,
An' he hollered ag'in.
'Then he started out over th' ice
Lookin' fer him.
Ther' was a patch o' open water
Where they'd cut th' ice clear away,
An' after Len'd been all over th' hard
part
He got ther'.
Well, that water give him a turn.
'Twas jest skimm'n' over ag'in
All 'cept one place,
An' he could see that wa'n't froze
'Cause th' wind ruffed it up
Jest as he got to it,
An' th' lantern light was all broke to bits
By th' waves.
Well, when Len seed that,
He give over huntin'.
He jest run fer th' sleigh

An' drove back home with his horse on
th' gallop
An' scared up th' folks.
Th' whole town went out with tools an'
grapples,
But 'twas all thick ice when they got to
th' pond.
They couldn't find nothin'.
They searched th' woods,
But 'twan't no use.
Mr. Marvin, th' coroner
Said as how th' body would come up
When th' ice melted.
But it didn't.
Then he said it must ha' been Si's axe
got caught
In th' weeds somehow an' held him
down.
I forgot to tell you th' axe was gone."

"Didn't they drag the pond?"

"They tried to,
But it's awful deep.
Anyhow they never found th' body.
But ther' ain't a mite o' doubt it's ther'."

"How long after was it Len married
Em'ly?"

"Oh, goin' on a year and half, I guess.
Len felt dreadful 'bout th' whole
thing.
He's one o' th' sens'tive sort,
An' he kep' blamin' himself
He hadn't kep' a watch on what Si was
doin'.
He felt he wanted to make it up to
Em'ly some way.
So he used to go up ther' twice a day,
An' saw her firewood,
An' redd up her horses,
An' 'tend to things generally.
It made a lot o' trampin'
An' I 'spec they thought 'twould be
easier if he jest stayed for keeps,
So they got married."

"He took a good deal on himself, didn't
he?"

"Well, I dunno.
Em'ly hadn't had no spells then.
Ther' didn't seem no risk."

"Good Land! Mis' Bixby.
What could ha' brought 'em on!
Our folks ain't never been subject to
fits."

"No, 'deed, Mis' Sanders,
Nor Em'ly neither, fer as th' neighbors
knew.
They come on all to onc't,
After she and Len'd been married a year
or more."

"It's awful strange 'bout th' body not
floatin'."

"Mr. Marvin said 'twas th' axe."

"But you'd ha' s'posed he'd ha' let go
o' th' axe
When he felt th' water sousin' over him."

"I never thought o' that.
P'raps 'twas tied onto him somehow."

"What would he want to tie his axe on
fer?
Would he ha' drove home that way?"

"Laws Sakes! I dunno.
But if 'twa'n't fastened on him,
Why didn't he float clear?"

"That was what I was thinkin'."

"Good Land o' God, Mis' Sanders!
You don't mean —"

"I don't mean nothin', Mis' Bixby.
I was jest thinkin' —
More hot water, Susan Ellen?
'Course, we'll have it in a jiffy."

THE DAY THAT WAS THAT DAY

*The wind rose, and the wind fell,
And the day that was that day
Floated under a high Heaven.*

"Home! Home! Home!"
*Sung a robin in a spice-bush.
"Sun on a roof-tree! Sun on a roof-tree!"
Ran; thin clouds
In a chord of silver across a placid sky.*

Rachel Gibbs stepped up the path
To pass the time of day

With Haywood Green's Minnie.
My, ef she ain't shut th' door!
An' all th' breeze this side th' house too.
She must like to stew.

"Minnie,
Minnie,
You ain't gone out have yer?
I'll skin my knuckles ef I knock agin.
I wonder did she lock th' door —
Well, I never!
Have you gone hard o' hearin'?
Have you —
Minnie, child, what's th' matter?
Why do you look like that?
What you doin'?
Speak I tell yer,
What you hidin' that cup fer?
God A'mighty, gal, what you doin' with
wood-alcohol

In a drinkin'-cup?
Here, give it ter me,
An' I'll set it on th' table.
Set down Minnie dear,
Set right here in th' rocker
An' tell me
What ails yer to be wantin'
To drink stuff like that?
There, there, you poor lamb,
Don't look so scared.
Jest tell me all about it,
An' ease your heart.
Minnie, I'll have to shake yer
Ef you don't stop starin'
In that dretful way.
Poor Dear,
You just lay your head up agin me
An' let me soothie yer.
Poor little thing,
Poor little thing."

"Don't, don't, Rachel,
I can't bear it.
I'm a wicked woman,
But I jest couldn't stand no more."

"No more o' what?
Ain't yer Pa good to yer?
What's come over yer, Minnie?
My! I'm jest as sorry as I can be."

"Oh, it ain't nothin' like that.
An' don't be so good to me,
You'll make me want to cry agin,
An' I can't cry.
I'm all dried up,

An' it's like squeezin' my heart sick
To want to cry, an' can't."

"But what is it?
Ain't yer never goin' ter tell me?"

"Why ther' ain't nothin' to tell
'Cept that I'm tired."

"Now, look-a-here, Minnie,
No one don't drink poison jest 'cause
they're tired."

"I didn't drink it, as it happens."

"No, you didn't, 'cause I come in an'
stopped yer.
But I'm mighty afeered you would have.
Lord, it makes me shudder!"

"I guess yer right,
I would have.
An' I wish you'd ha' let me be.
Now it's all to do over agin,
An' I don't know as I'll git th' courage
A second time.
I guess you ain't never been right down
tired, Rachel."

"Well, never to th' poison point, no, I
haven't.
But what's gone wrong to wear yer out
so?"

"The cat's sick."

"Minnie Green, was you takin' poison
'Cause you got a sick cat?
That's down-right foolishness."

"Yes, it does sound so.
But I couldn't face nussin' her.
Look here, Rachel,
I may be foolish, or mad, or jest plain
bad,
But I couldn't stan' another thing.
I'm all fretted now
An' more's one too many.
I can't go on!
Oh, God! I can't go on!
I ain't got no more'n most women,
I know that,
But I fuss a lot more.
There's al'ays th' same things

Goin' roun' like th' spokes to a cart-
wheel,

Ef one ain't a-top it's another,
An' th' next comin' up all th' time.
It's breakfast, an' dinner, an' supper,
Every day.

An' th' same dishes to wash.

I hate them dishes.

I smashed a plate yesterday

'Cause I couldn't bear to see it

Settin' on th' sink waitin' fer me.

An' when I go up to make Father's bed

I git seasick

Thinkin' I'll have to see that old check
spread agin.

I've settled it,

An' twitched it this way an' that,

For thirty year,

An' I hate th' sight o' th' thing.

Sometimes I've set an hour on th' stair

Ruther'n go in an' touch it.

Oh my God! Why couldn't yer let me
be?

Why'd you have to come interferin'?

Why?

Why?"

"Thank th' Everlastin' Mercy I did!
But, Minnie, how long's this been goin'
on?

I never had no idea anythin' was wrong."

"I don't know.

For ever an' ever, I guess.

Rachel, you can't think how hard it is
fer me

To set one foot after th' other sometimes.

I hate lookin' out th' winder,

I'm so tired o' seein' th' path to th' barn.

An' I can't hardly bear

To hear father talkin' to th' horses.

He loves 'em.

But I don't love nothin'

'Cept th' cat,

An' cats is cold things to cling to,

An' now mine's sick!"

"Don't take on so, Minnie.

She'll get well.

There, you rest awhile

You can tell me afterwards."

*A wind rose, and a wind fell,
And the day that was that day
Hung against a turning sun.*

*The robin sang "Home! Home! Home!"
In an up-and-down scale of small, bright
notes.*

*The clouds rang silver arpeggios
Stretched across a pleasant sky.*

"I wish I loved somethin', Rachel."

"Bless your heart, Child, don't you love
yer Pather?"

"I suppose so. But he don't mean nothin'
ter me.

He don't say nothin' I want ter hear.
My ears is achin' to hear words,
Words like what's written in books,
Words that would make me all bright
like a Spring day.

I lay awake nights
Thinkin' o' hearin' things,
An' seein' things.
I'm awful tired o' these hills,
They crowd in so.
Seems sometimes ef I could see th' ocean,
Or a real big city,
'Twould help.

Kind o' lay my eyes out straight fer a
while,

Everythin's so short here
My eyes feels pushed in,
An' it hurts 'em.

I love laylocks,
But I git so tired o' watchin'
Th' leaves come an' th' flowers

Every year th' same,
I'd like to root 'em up.

I've set an' set in th' kitchen evenin's
Awful late,

Fer not bein' able to git up an' light th'
lamp

'To go ter bed.

I'm all lead somehow.

I guess ef anybody did say anythin'

I'd be deaf

Jest with listenin' so long.

I'm plumb tired out."

"Look-a-here, Minnie,
Why don't you go away
Fer a spell?"

"Me go away!

Oh, no, I couldn't never do that.

I couldn't go no place.

I can't hardly git over to Dicksville

Fer my week with Aunt Abby now.
I'm all wrong away from home.
I can't do nothin'
Nothin' at all.
I'm so awful tired."

"Minnie, did you ever love anybody?
Any man, I mean?"

"No, Rachel, I never did.

I know that sounds queer, but it's a fact.
I've tried to think I did,
But 'twarn't true.

I hadn't hardly no time fer men folks,
Mother was sick so long.

An' then ther' was Father.

I never was much account with 'em any-
way,

But I s'pose I might ha' had one

Ef I'd fixed my mind so.

But I al'ays waited.

An' now I'm through waitin',

I'm through waitin' fer anythin', Rachel.

It's jest go, go, go,

With never no end,

And nothin' done that ain't to do over
agin.

Ther' now it's six o'clock,

An' I must be gittin' supper.

You needn't move that cup, Rachel.

I ain't a-goin' to touch it.

I'll jest keep on now till th' Lord takes
me

An' I only hope he'll do it soon."

*The robin flew down from the spice-bush
And pecked about for worms.*

*The clouds were brazen trumpets
Tumbled along the edge of an apple-
coloured sky.*

The shadow of the house

Fell across the path to the barn

*Confusing it with the grass and the
daisies.*

*A wind rose, and a wind fell,
And the day that was that day
Vanished in the darkness.*

A DRACULA OF THE HILLS

Yes, I can understan' ther's a sort o'
pleasure collectin' old customs
An' linin' 'em up like a card o' butterflies.
Some on 'em's real quaint, I dessey,

But lookin's one thing an' livin's another.
 Folks don't figger on th' quaintness o' th'
 things they're doin',
 Ther' ain't no knick-knack about it then,
 I guess.
 Times is changed since my young days,
 Don't seem like th' same world I used
 to live in.
 What with th' telephones an' th' auto-
 mobiles,
 An' city folks rampin' all over th' place
 Summers,
 Lots o' things has kind o' faded out.
 But I remember some queer goin's
 on;
 They seem queer 'nough to me now,
 lookin' back.
 We had good times a-plenty, nat'rally,
 But they're all jumbled up together when
 I think on 'em,
 I can't git ahold o' one more'n another,
 While ther's some fearful strange things
 I can't ever lose a mite of,
 No matter how I try.
 I'd like to forgit 'bout Florella Perry,
 But I ain't never be'n able to.
 I don't know as you'd call it a custom,
 'Twarn't th' first time th' like had hap-
 pened, I know,
 But ther' ain't never no such doin's now-
 adays.
 Do the Lord's ways change, I wonder?
 Superstition, you call it—but I don't
 know.
 Seein's believin' all th' world over,
 An' 'twas my own father seed
 An' others besides him.
 I didn't, 'cause I was a young girl an'
 not let,
 But I watched th' beginnin's;
 An' what my eyes didn't see, my ears
 heerd,
 An' that afore other folks' secin' was
 cold, as you might say.
 'Twas all of forty year ago;
 I was jest a slip of a girl drawin' toward
 th' beau stage but not yit ther'.
 One day I'd be thinkin' o' nothin' but
 ribbons,
 An' th' next I'd go coastin' bellybumps
 all afternoon with th' boys.
 Florella made me a woman for fair;
 P'raps that was a good thing, 'twas time
 for it,
 But I be'n a woman long 'nough now

An' I kind o' like to look back to what
 went afore.
 I warn't livin' here then;
 My husband was a Rockridge man
 An' I come here when I married.
 I was raised t'other side o' Bear Moun-
 tain to Penowasset.
 Father kep' th' store ther'.
 They thought a heap o' him in th' town
 An' I had a happy childhood.
 We didn't live over th' shop,
 But quite along by th' end o' th' village
 In a house my mother got from her
 father.
 We had a couple o' fields an' a wood lot
 An' kep' a hired man.
 Father used to drive back an' forth in a
 buggy mornin's an' evenin's,
 But Mother an' me didn't miss for neigh-
 bors.
 Jared Pierce owned a fine big farm just
 beyond us,
 An' Joe Perry's was t'other side th' road.
 Florella was Joe's wife,
 An' a real pretty creatur she was,
 Fragile as a chiney plate
 An' bright an' tidy as a June pink in sun-
 shine.
 She loved flowers;
 Her door-yard was like a nosegay from
 May till October.
 I never seen sich flowers as hers;
 Nobody else couldn't make 'em bloom
 so,
 Even when she give 'em th' seeds.
 Her snowdrops was al'ays first up in th'
 Spring,
 An' it took more'n a couple o' frosts to
 kill her late asters.
 Th' way we knew she was ill was when
 th' garden begun to git weedy.
 She an' Joe'd be'n married 'bout seven
 year then,
 An' My! but they'd be'n happy!
 Exceptin' for not havin' a child, I don't
 think ther' was a thing they wanted.
 An' then Florella took sick.
 It come with a cough one Winter,
 An' she couldn't seem to git back her
 stren'th.
 Come plantin' time, she couldn't do it.
 Joe done his best, but that year th'
 garden warn't nothin' peticular.
 Florella used to set in her rocker on th'
 piazza lookin' at it an' cryin'.

Many's th' time I've slipped over an'
done a little rakin' for her.
At first she liked me to do it,
But after a while she said to let it alone;
Ef it warn't her garden, she said, she
didn't care nothin' 'bout it.
She spoke almost fierce, I thought, an' I
didn't go over agin for quite a spell.
When I did, Florella had took to her
bed.
She was a queer kind of invalid. You
couldn't seem to help her any.
She'd let you do things an' thank you,
But she al'ays seemed angry that you had
to come.
One day I was dustin' her room, an' she
said to me:
"Becky, I ain't a-goin' to die."
"Course you ain't, Florella," says I,
"Whatever put that into your head?"
She flared up at that.
"Tain't no use lyin' to me, Becky Wales,
I know I'm dyin'."
But I won't die. You'll see.
I'll find some way o' livin'.
Even ef they bury me, I'll live.
You can't kill me, I ain't th' kind to kill.
I'll live! I'll live, I tell you,
Ef there's a Devil to help me do it!"
She screamed this out at me, settin' up
in bed
An' p'intin' with her finger.
I was so scared I had to grab a chair to
keep from fallin',
An' Joe come runnin' in from th' barn.
He took her in his arms an' soothed her,
An' she bust out cryin' an' sunk into a
little heap in th' big bed
So's you couldn't hardly see her, she was
so thin.
Joe sent me home. He said not to mind
Florella,
That she was flighty an' didn't know
what she was sayin'.
Well, after that things got worse.
Florella had spell after spell;
You could hear her cryin' an' hollerin'
way down th' road.
It was al'ays th' same thing: she wouldn't
die,
Nobody could make her die.
"I was awful pitiful to hear her takin' on.
Sometimes she'd moan an' moan,
An' then she'd break out crazy mad an'
angry, screamin' for life.

Joe was at his wits' end.
Dr. Smilie said ther' warn't nothin' to
do for her
'Cept give her quietin' draughts.
But Florella wouldn't take 'em;
She said they was a little death,
An' she'd throw down th' cup every time
they give it to her.
Then she took a notion to see Anabel
Flesche.
She was a queer sort of woman, was
Anabel,
She lived in a little shed of a place over
Chester way.
Some said she had Indian blood in her,
Anyway she was leam'd in herbs an'
semples;
She claimed to know jest when to pick
'em,
An' she talked a lot o' foolishness about
th' full o' th' moon,
An' three hours before dawn, an' th' dew
o' th' second Friday,
An' things like that.
Well, Florella had her in,
An' she made her camomile teas an'
lotions, out o' leaves an' plants she'd
gathered,
An' fussed around with bits o' wax an'
string,
But Florella didn't change none.
She kep' sinkin' an' sinkin',
An' th' cryin' spells got to comin' oftener.
She cried most o' th' time then.
I used to set in th' stair winder
When I'd oughter be'n in bed, listenin'.
It made my flesh creep to hear her poor
cracked voice declarin' she wouldn't
die,
An' all th' time she was dyin' plain as
pikestaff.
I never see nobody so hungry for life;
She was jest starvin' for it.
Why, even when ther' warn't nothin' lef'
of her but eyes an' bones,
She'd talk an' talk 'bout th' life she'd a
right to, an' she was gom' to have,
come what or nothin'!
It was kind o' lonesome out our way then;
Most o' th' passin' got to go by th' Brook
Road.
"Twarn't so handy by a good two mile,
But nobody couldn't a-bear to hear
Florella
Callin' an' wailin'.

You couldn't count ten th' times she was still.
 'Twas a awful witchin' sound, comin' through th' night th' way it did;
 I know I got all frazzled out losin' my sleep for hearin' it.
 Mother an' Mis' Pierce used to take it in turns to watch her,
 An' 'twas a real kindness to do it,
 It wore th' nerves so.
 One Saturday afternoon Mis' Pierce was with her,
 When all of a suddint she jumped out o' bed,
 Cryin' she was goin' int' th' garden,
 That she was well now an' wouldn't be kep' back no more.
 Mis' Pierce caught her just as she was goin' through th' door
 An' ther' was a struggle, I guess.
 Joe heerd where he was out in th' yard hoein' beans.
 He was scared to death, an' jest heaved his hoe up onto his shoulder
 An' run in as he was.
 Florella seed him comin' with th' hoc up on his shoulder,
 An' she screamed a fearful wild scream:
 "You too, Joe!" she said,
 "You want to kill me same as th' others? But you shan't do it.
 I'll live to spite you,
 I'll live because o' you."
 She was mockin', an' grinnin', an' coughin',
 An' menacin' him with her finger,
 An' her head joggin' back an' forth from shoulder to shoulder like a rag-doll's.
 Mis' Pierce run'd over an' tell'd Mother soon's she could git a minit,
 An' them was her very words.
 Now Florella loved Joe as only a rare few women do love;
 But she was jest plumb crazy by this time,
 Worryin' 'bout th' life was leavin' her, an' all eat up with consumption.
 But it didn't make no difference to Joe,
 He loved her al'ays.
 He jest picked her up an' laid her back in bed,
 An' she went off unconscious an' never come to.
 She died that night.

I mind it well, 'cause th' whippoorwills'd be'n so loud th' night before;
 When I'd heerd 'em I'd thought Florella's time was come.
 I've al'ays hated funerals,
 I can't a-bear to look on a corpse
 An' Florella's was dretful.
 Not that she warn't pretty;
 She was. Even her sickness hadn't sp'iled her beauty.
 She was like herself in a glass, somehow,
 An' old glass where you don't see real clear.
 'Twas like music to look at her,
 Only for her mouth.
 Ther' was a queer, awful smile 'bout her mouth.
 It made her look jeery, not a bit th' way Florella used to look.
 Ef I shut my eyes I can see that face now,
 Blue, an' thin an' th' lips all twisted up an' froze so.
 I guess I've seen that face in my mind every day for forty year, more or less.
 Well, they buried her, an' we girls set pansies an' lobelia all about her grave
 An' took turns tendin' 'em, week by week.
 I'd loved Florella,
 An', when she was dead, I rec'lected her as she was 'fore her sickness come
 An' forgot th' rest.
 Two years is a long time to watch a person die,
 An' Joe'd done more nussin' than most husbands.
 He kind o' pined when 'twas all finished,
 But th' neighbors kep' a-droppin' in to see him,
 An' Mother an' Mis' Pierce did him up every so often,
 An' bimeby he got ahold of himself,
 An' seemed to be gittin' on nicely.
 He was a proper good farmer
 An' things was goin' well with him,
 All 'ceptin' his sorrow, which nothin' couldn't lift, nat'rally,
 When th' next Winter he caught a bad cold.
 I guess he let it go too far afore he saw th' doctor;
 Anyhow it got a good settle on him an' he couldn't shake it off.
 Nobody'd have thought much of it, I

guess, but for Florella beginnin' th' same way.
 Joe warn't concerned, he said he'd be all right come Spring,
 But he warn't. He'd try to do his work as usual,
 But soon he'd give over an' set down.
 He was real patient, but he didn't git no better.
 Dr Smilie begun to look grave.
 One day I went over with a bowl o' soup from Mother.
 Joe was settin' in th' garden, by a bed o' portulaca;
 They's cruel bright flowers, an' Joe looked so grey beside 'em
 I got a start to see him.
 "Becky," says he, "I know you loved Florella,
 An' I should like you to have her flowers," says he.
 "I've willed th' farm to my brother over to Hillsborough,
 But you can dig up th' flowers afore he takes possession."
 "Joe," I said, "Joe—" an' I couldn't git out another word for th' life o' me.
 "Yes," he went on, "o' course I'm goin'.
 I've give her all I could, but it can't last.
 Anabel Flesche was here yesterday, an' she told me.
 I'm glad to ease her any, you know that,
 But it can't last."
 Glad to ease Anabel Flesche—I thought,
 But I know'd he didn't mean that.
 I run right home an' told Mother, an' she told Father,
 An' that evenin' they druv down to Dr. Smilie's.
 The doctor 'lowed 'twas consumption, but he was angry enough 'bout Anabel Flesche.
 "I'll see that hussy stops her trapesin'," he said,
 "Rilin' up a sick man with her witch stories," he said.
 "I'll witch her, I'll run her out o' town if she comes agin."
 Anabel didn't come agin, but I guess she done it th' first time,
 For Joe didn't seem to take much int'rest in gittin' well.

When a man don't want to live, he don't live, an' that's gospel.
 Joe went down hill so fast that by Midsummer ther' warn't no hope.
 I used to set with him a good deal,
 An' 'twas queer how diff'rent he was to Florella.
 I think he was th' quietest man I ever see.
 He didn't seem to have no pleasure 'cept in speakin' 'bout Florella.
 By times he told me everythin':
 How he courted her, an' what she said, an' th' way she looked when he brought her home.
 I got awful near life for a young girl with th' things he told me.
 I've be'n married an' widowed since, but I don't know as I ever got nearer to things than Joe's talk brought me.
 Men ain't alike, an' women ain't alike, an' marriages is th' most unlike of all.
 My marriage, when it come, was no more like Joe's an' Florella's
 Than a piney's like a cabbage.
 But this ain't my story.
 "Florella had a strong will," says Joe to me one afternoon.
 Autumn had come by then, an' some o' th' leaves had fell,
 An' those that hung on were so bright they seemed to fairly smarten up th' sun.
 Joe was layin' in his bed with a patch-work quilt over him,
 A lovely one 'twas, the State House Steps pattern;
 Florella'd made it, she was wonderful clever with her needle.
 Th' whole room was a blaze o' sunshine.
 Right on th' chimbley hung a picture o' Florella
 Some travellin' artist had painted th' year she was married.
 I don't suppose city folk would have made much of it,
 But I thought 'twas a sweet pretty thing, an' th' spon-image o' Florella.
 "Florella had a mighty strong will," says Joe agin.
 "She owned me body an' soul, an' that was a rare pride to me."
 I couldn't figger what to answer, so I didn't.
 "I guess she owns me still," he says, an'

I don't know ef he was really talkin' to me.
 "I'm glad she does. It's got to be both o' us, all or neither, together."
 He smiled at that, very slow an' tired, almost as though it hurt his lips to do it.
 "Perhaps you don't understand, little Becky," said he.
 I don't know whether I did or not, an' I didn't have a chance to say,
 For all of a sudden crash down come Florella's picture on th' floor with th' cord broke.
 I jumped nearly out o' my skin, I expect I screamed too,
 But Joe didn't so much as shiver.
 "Yes," he said, lookin' at me with his steady smile,
 "This proves it. You mark my words. It can't go on much longer. Poor Florella!"
 He sighed then an' layed down, an' I thought he went to sleep.
 I picked up th' picture, but th' glass had cut it badly,
 All about th' mouth too.
 It make it look th' way Florella's corpse did an' give me a turn.
 I was afeerd Joe'd see it when he waked up,
 So I set it with its face aginst th' wall.
 But I needn't have bothered, for Joe never waked up.
 When Mother come, she didn't think he looked right,
 An' she sent for Dr. Smilie.
 He warn't dead when th' doctor got ther',
 But he was unconscious an' hardly breathin';
 He stayed like that for a day an' a night
 An' then 'twas all over.
 All over for Joe, yes,
 But not for us.
 About a week after th' funeral, Father met Anabel Flesche.
 "So Joe Perry's dead," whined Anabel, an' Father was sure th' old hag looked pleased.
 He only said, "Yes, he's dead," an' was pushin' on when Anabel stopped him.
 "Florella's a determined woman," she cackled, "ain't you afeerd she'll try somebody else?"
 "What th' Hell do you mean?" cried out Father.

"She loved life," said Anabel, in a queer, sly way,
 "Joe's gone, but ther's others."
 Father was so angry he couldn't trust himself to speak,
 He jest touched up his horse an' druv on.
 But what Anabel said rankled.
 He an' Mother talked it over that night.
 I warn't supposed to hear, but I did.
 I was all shook up with th' things had happened
 An' I daresn't stay in bed alone with nobody near,
 So I used to creep out an' set on th' stairs
 Till Father an' Mother come up.
 It comforted me to know they was in th' next room,
 An' I could sleep then.
 Mother was real strict, an' I was al'ays sent to bed at nine;
 They'd come up 'bout ten, an' I'd set that hour on th' stairs
 Where I could look int' th' kitchen an' see 'em.
 That's how I come to hear.
 Afterwards I 'lowed I knew, an' they told me everythin'.
 Well, to make a long story short,
 Father an' Jared Pierce went straight to th' Selectmen,
 An' told 'em what Anabel was hintin'.
 Then some old people rec'lected things which had happened years ago,
 An', puttin' two an' two together, they decided to see for themselves.
 The Selectmen was all ther', an' Father, an' Jared Pierce;
 They did it at night so's not to scare folks.
 I warn't ther', but Father told it so I think I seen it:
 Th' leaves blowin' an' sidlin' down,
 Th' lantern light jerkin' 'long th' ground,
 Th' noise o' th' pickaxes an' spades.
 They got up th' coffin an' opened it.
 Florella's body was all gone to dust,
 Though 'twarn't much more'n a year she'd be'n buried,
 But her heart was as fresh as a livin' person's,
 Father said it glittered like a garnet when they took th' lid off th' coffin.
 It was so 'live, it seemed to beat almost.
 Father said a light come from it so strong it made shadows

Much heavier than th' lantern shadows
 an' runnin' in a different direction.
 Oh, they burnt it; they al'ays do in such
 cases,
 Nobody's safe till it's burnt.
 Now, sir, will you tell me how such
 things used to be?
 They don't happen now, seemingly, but
 this happened.
 You can see Joe's grave over to Pen-
 wasset buryin'-ground
 Ef you go that way.
 The church-members wouldn't let Flor-
 ella's ashes be put back in hers,
 So you won't find that.
 Only an open space with a maple in th'
 middle of it;
 'They planted th' tree so's no one
 wouldn't ever be buried in that spot
 agin.

THE NOTE-BOOK IN THE GATE-LEGGED TABLE

Richardson, Erik Follows, Reed and I
 Were all comparing notes on our vaca-
 tions
 One evening after dinner. Richardson
 Had been to Labrador on a coasting
 steamer
 And run across a half a dozen whales
 In the mating season. He has an eye for
 colour
 And picturesque detail, his flashing ocean
 And his superb, preoccupied great whales
 Love-hunted into fighting, was a thing
 I might not have forgotten, but — you'll
 see,
 We'd something bigger even than his
 whales
 To occupy us later on. Tom Reed
 Had climbed Mount Everest and broken
 his leg,
 And crawled and starved for near a week
 before
 A searching party found him. I had been
 Playing the miner for socialistic reasons,
 And I thought I had a pretty tale to
 tell
 Until I heard the others. I began,
 A bit puffed up to start with, then came
 Reed,
 Then Richardson, the last was Erik
 Follows.
 I rather think he'd needed his vacation

More than the rest of us; he worked so
 hard.
 A doctor can work himself down to bare
 nerves
 If he's in love with his profession, and
 Follows
 Cared more for his than any man I know.
 An alienist has many leads to follow.
 But Erik's leads all seemed to follow
 him;
 'They ran him down a dozen times a
 day
 And even tracked him into his vacations.
 That's why we'd left his tale until the
 last,
 For he was sure to have encountered
 something.
 He had; he showed it to us. A gate-
 legged table
 Of old mahogany, as soft as skin,
 The colour of maple-syrup, with slender
 legs,
 And just a touch of brass to liven it —
 The round-ringed handle of its one small
 drawer.
 And out of this drawer it came, the amaz-
 ing thing.
 A little, pigskin-bound, octavo booklet,
 Ruled for accounts, but kept for notes,
 it seemed.
 Half of the pages were blank, the rest
 were scrawled
 With a large, oafish sort of pencil-writing.
 So blurred and rubbed, it hardly could be
 read.
 But Follows had read it; you see it was
 a lead.
 "Well?" — we all said, for we could
 see at once
 That Follows had a clue which stretched
 away
 From just this note-book. "Well" — he
 said at last,
 "I took a little trip into the Berkshires
 Last Autumn in my car. One afternoon
 I chanced to pass a farm-house where an
 auction
 Was being held, and went in just for fun.
 It was a pretty place. A little brook
 Nuzzled its way along a boggy meadow
 Behind a barn with a ship weather-vane,
 Which should have struck me, but some-
 how it didn't,
 And, just beyond, one of those odd-
 shaped hills

You see in Hiroshige's prints ran up,
 A slope of hemlocks, right into the sky.
 The house was low and wide, with both
 its porches
 So thickly covered with Virginia creeper
 The lattice laths might have been
 creeper-stems.
 The crimson of the leaves in the Autumn
 sunlight
 Against the old white paint was strangely
 cheerful.
 I liked the place at once; it seemed a
 shame
 To scatter all the queer, comfortable old
 things
 Had been there for so long. I stopped
 to look
 A moment at the crowd, trampling the
 garden
 And shuffling through the house, then I
 went in
 And bought that table in a sort of pity
 That all these things spread round were
 up for sale.
 The old stock ended — it was the usual
 story —
 Gone West, or dead, no one to keep the
 farm.
 I bought the table, ordered it expressed,
 Pondered the natural queries which an
 auction
 Always arouses for a day or so,
 And finished out my trip without adven-
 ture.
 Without adventure, yes, that was to
 come.
 It must have been at least two weeks
 before
 I found a moment to unbox my table.
 I set it up, dusted it, opened the leaves,
 And in the drawer I found this diary;
 For that is what it is, a diary.
 There is no date, but I can tell you now
 'The notes were made in eighteen eighty-
 nine.
 But I don't know who wrote them.
 There's no name;
 And that, I think, I never shall discover.
 The diary begins — I'll read it to you,
 Just a few pages, and then tell the rest."
 He picked the book up from the table
 and read
 Slowly and quietly, yet it rang my nerves
 It was so still and horrible.

"My God!

Why have they sent me up here to the
 grass?
 Sent me to live among the hateful grass!
 The terrible, creeping, creeping, pitiless
 grass!
 What is this thing, this gorging, endless
 thing,
 Moving so slowly that it baffles sight,
 But never stopping either night or day?
 We mow it down, and in a week again
 It covers all the place we have laid bare.
 Man builds his roads through grass. With
 breaking toil,
 With sweat and muscle-ache he forces
 his way
 Across the earth. He shears the grasses
 down
 And keeps them there with infinite stress
 of wheels,
 But if he pauses in his travelling,
 If for a space he rests, worn with fatigue,
 The ravening grass has run across his
 paths
 And choked them utterly away. Oh,
 God!
 The chatter, chatter, chatter, of the grass!
 I hear it in the night crying for men
 To feed its vitals with their own. I see
 It crawling toward this thin, unstable
 house,
 Thrusting its clutching fingers through
 the boards,
 Swallowing the poor weak flowers in their
 beds.
 What is this house? A flimsy, man-made
 thing
 Besieged on all sides by the gluttonous
 grass.
 They speak of spears of grass, but I see
 bellies
 Bellies which feed on man-blood; feet
 which suck
 Entrails of human beings. I am mad.
 Tortured to see this island of a house
 Waiting to be engulfed. And they have
 sent
 Me here for rest! Oh, Fools! Fools! I,
 alone —
 The myriads of grass are more than I.
 I cannot eat, for I will feed no grass.
 I cannot sleep for listening to it drink
 And fortify its waiting strength with
 dew.
 They tell me to go sit upon the hill

Under the hemlocks where no grass can grow.

But do not trees themselves flourish on graves?

They laugh, the farmer and his sons, they do not think

Of the fat, waving grass that I have seen
In the churchyard. I often go to watch
How green, how wicked green, it grows
just there.

Last night I heard a little quiet noise,
A wood-pecker noise, but very, very soft,
And it was in the middle of the night.
I listened for hours till the grey light
came,
And then it stopped, and then at last I
slept."

The doctor paused, but not one of us spoke.

He turned some pages over and went on:
"I hear it now on almost every night
And all day long my head aches. Lack of
sleep,

I know. And that is very bad, for when
I do not sleep, my hearing is so sharp
I very nearly catch the words they say,
'The grasses. Only not quite, not quite;
and this

Hearing and not is piercing my head
through,

Burning it up with irons, hot and cold,
So that I break out in a chilly sweat.
The farmer's wife tells me I'm looking
badly,

Should go out more. But that I will not
do.

I never go out now. The grass is there.
I have no money; the town doctors saw
To that. 'No care at all,' they said, 'just
grow

As the grass grows.' I laughed, oh, I did
laugh!

And still they sent me here to rest. My
ears!

My ears! They hurt with all the noise.
The tapping

Is louder every night. It seems as though
It tried to drown the whimper of the
grass,

But nothing can do that. And I can't go
Away, I have no money, not a cent.

I cannot walk, for I must walk through
grass.

I've whittled bits of wood to stop my
ears,

But, with them in, I think I hear the
leaves

Of some dead tree stuttering out my
name

In a ghoulish whisper. So I take them
out.

The tapping is better, even the stealthy,
licking

Murmur which comes from all that tide
of grass.

I've found it out at last. I made them
tell me.

I threatened them one evening with a
knife,

And said I'd go to bed like a good boy
When once they'd told. It seems that,

years ago,
Fifty years or a hundred, I don't remem-
ber,

An old sea-captain came up here to live.
He'd left the sea, and as his daughter was

married

To the man who owned this place, they
took him home

To die, whenever that might happen.
But he

Was marvellously afraid of just this dy-
ing,

Because he felt like me about the grass.
He used to swear that it should never get

him,
And begged his daughter to cast him in
the sea.

But she, a decent, quiet woman, was
shocked,

And he could never make her give her
promise.

At length he hit upon a compromise
And made the two of them agree to

it.
His coffin was to be slung from a high
beam

Beneath the roof-peak of the barn, and
left

To rot and crumble. When they'd given
their words,

He had that vane I've often wondered at
Set up there on the barn, he liked to

watch

The wind-flaws veer it round and round,
 he said,
 And they were satisfied and never
 thought
 Beyond his reason. But I know more
 than they.
 I know he set it for a sign, a symbol,
 A monument. He died at last quite happy
 Believing he had overcome the grass.
 Way up under the roof-peak swung the
 coffin,
 And mostly folk forgot that it was there.
 It gathered dust and cobwebs and grew
 dim,
 You couldn't rightly see it when you
 looked,
 For all the chaff and hayseed floating
 round
 Made a kind of blur to any one below.
 But, one day, many years after that time,
 The farmer's son, going to feed the
 horses,
 Heard a loud, intermittent sort of bang-
 ing
 Under the roof, and when he took the
 ladder
 And climbed up there to see, he found a
 strap
 Had given way, and the coffin hung head
 down
 Suspended by the other, and there it
 teetered
 To and fro with every gust of wind
 When the barn-door was open. So he
 said
 He'd fix it in the morning. But that night
 He woke to hear a rap-tap-tapping, so
 like
 A hammer—but that was a foolish
 thought,
 He knew directly what the thing must be,
 Some stanchion broken loose in the high
 wind.
 It was a stormy night, so he decided
 He'd leave the shutter, or whatever it
 was,
 Until next day, and fell asleep again.
 But in the morning, when he went to
 see
 About the coffin, it was all nailed up
 As firm as could be with a harness-strap.
 They thought that very odd, they little
 knew
 What men can do who have the fear of
 grass,

What fear can make men do although
 they're dead.
 But I have found a hero I can worship,
 Napolcon, Julius Caesar, what are these?
 They never ruled the grass, it sucked
 them up
 And drank their brains, and overscored
 their towns.
 O rare and mighty Captain, here's my
 hand,
 Mightier than all men have been before!
 Dominant Master, even over grass!
 Not by the accident of death at sea,
 But by compelling force in your own soul
 To be forever above these miles of grass,
 As no one ever in the world has been.
 I feel a leaping fervour to join my hand
 With yours, to grasp your bony, brittle
 fingers
 Unstained by grass-roots. To-morrow I
 will go
 And offer sacrifices to your manes.
 How soaring my thoughts are released at
 last
 From all the demon grasses that have
 gnawed
 At them these months past! Now I go to
 bed,
 And I shall sleep to-night.

Oh, merciless God! The coffin is not
 there!
 They tell me it crumbled many years ago,
 And where the bones are no one knows.
 A jelly-fish
 With oozing, pulpy brain, a worthless
 polype
 Tossed in the air by a Devil-God for fun,
 That's what I am, and have been, ever
 to think
 One could cheat grass! The squirming,
 oily grass!
 It waited, lapping round and round the
 walls
 Of the old barn to catch him as he fell.
 The terrible, blind grass, feeling its way
 With little patting hands. Feeling its
 way
 Slowly, horribly, over all mankind.
 There is no safety anywhere at all
 For any people. The clapboards of this
 house
 Will peel off one by one, the floor will
 crack

And through the cracks will come the
grinning grass.

My legs will find it stifling them in nets,
My open hands be shut with thongs of
grass,

My mouth will hold its roots, my nose
its heads,

And in my ears the clatter of its laughter
Will burst my brain and cleave my sense-
less skull.

I cannot wait and watch, the strain is fire
Stretching and shrivelling me till my
bones twist

And drive their needle ends out through
my flesh,

And all I see is blood struck through with
green,

The bloated green of over-nourished
grass.

You dastard God, who set this hideous
thing

Upon us! Curse you! Curse you! And
all this

Foul, beastly, eating Earth. You shall
not have me,

I'll die before I'm eaten. I'll squeeze my
hands

About my neck until my eyes spit out
And after them the blood which is my

life.

I cannot do it, my fingers are too thin.
But I will find a way to strengthen them,

I'll think of nothing but how to find a
way,

I'll kill myself with thinking — "

Follows stopped,
And closed the book. "That entry is the
last,"

He said, quite simply, "but there's more
to tell.

For I went back to Oakfield — that was
the nearest

Village to the farm — and found a man
Who'd known the Crawfords in the

eighteen eighties.

And when I asked him if they'd had a
boarder,

He said, 'Oh, yes, a poor demented fel-
low,

Sent up there for the quiet of the
country.'

He'd been there just about three months,
he told me,

And then, one day when no one was
about,

He'd hanged himself by an old harness-
strap

To one of the barn beams. He said no
more.

Perhaps he did not know about the
coffin,

And clearly he knew nothing of the man.
I think I've learned a salutary lesson.

I might myself have been one of those
doctors

Prescribing easily 'Rest in the country.'
But, all the same, I wish I'd had a chance

To try my hand. And even as I say it,
I realize what harpies science makes us.

I pity him profoundly — yet a case
Like his to perish on a harness-strap!

Good Lord, what brutes we are! And
now let's talk

Of something cheerful. Richardson, your
whales —

THE ROSEBUD WALL-PAPER

So you been peekin' int' th' winders o'
th' old porch house to th' Four

Corners,
Have ye?

Wall, I dunno as anybody wouldn't be
puzzled

Not knowin' nothin' 'bout it, an' seein'
it th' way 'tis.

I bet you had a time pushin' through
them cat-briers

That's growed up all about it.
Terrible stiff bushes they be, an' th'

scratchiest things goin'.

Oh, you needn't tell me!
Many's th' first-class tear I've got from

'em in my time.

Not those pertic'ler ones, I ain't no call
to go shovin' through them,

An' what on earth you wanted to tackle
'em for beats me.

But, since you been ther',
It's just nater you should want to know.

A house all sagged down an' rotted, an'
th' chimbley fell,

An' every room spick an' span with new
wall-paper!

Sort o' creepy, was it?
I guess th' creeps is ther' all right,

But we figgered we'd smothered 'em with
that rosebud paper.

Mrs. Pearson, th' doctor's wife, had th'
choosin' of it.

She went to Boston a-purpose when th'
 town decided to put it on.
 I al'ays thought 'twas kind o' gay for
 what they wanted it for,
 But Mrs. Pearson said it had ought to
 be gay
 An' she's a real tasty woman;
 Nobody darsn't go agin her judgment in
 this town,
 Least of all th' selectmen with th' doctor
 chairman o' th' board.
 Well, Mr. Day, ther's a good long story
 to that wall-paper.
 'Th' beginnin's way back, all of thirty
 year, I guess.
 Ther' was a storekeeper here at that time,
 name o' Amos Sears.
 He warn't a native o' th' place,
 I've heerd he come from somewheres
 down Cape Cod way,
 He just sort o' drifted here an' stuck.
 His wife was dead, an' he had a son,
 young Amos,
 Who used to play around with us boys.
 You know what boys be, al'ays in an'
 out o' one another's pockets.
 Young Amos was a fine, upstandin' chap.
 We all favoured him, but he an' Luke
 Bartlett was like a plum an' its skin,
 You couldn't peel 'em apart.
 They beat th' band for mischief an' high
 jinks,
 Th' rest of us just follered along an'
 caught th' lickin's.
 'Bout th' time we was gittin' through
 school, old Amos died.
 We thought, o' course, young Amos'd
 settle right down to th' shop,
 But he wouldn't hear to it, said he
 couldn't rest quiet without he'd done
 a bit o' trapesin'
 Afore he took root for keeps;
 An' first thing we knew, he'd hired Tom
 Wetherbee to look after th' business
 An' was off.
 He wanted Luke should go with him,
 But Luke was a real steady youngster,
 he'd 'prenticed himself to a stone-
 mason
 An' wouldn't budge.
 I guess now he wishes some he'd gone,
 But I dunno, 'tain't easy seein' into other
 folks' minds.
 I went studyin' surveyin' to Barre
 An' warn't here when Amos left.

Luke heerd from him two or three times,
 But pretty soon th' letters stopped,
 Tom Wetherbee went on 'tendin' to th'
 shop
 An' payin' his own wages out o' th' earn-
 in's.
 What he didn't need for repairin' an' to
 keep th' stock up, he put in th' bank
 for Amos,
 But Amos never drew any of it,
 So it just piled up.
 What Amos lived on, I dunno, he never
 told nobody to my knowledge.
 But he lived somehow, an' after ten years
 He come back with a wife.
 Mrs. Amos was a fine figger of a woman,
 With eyes like steel traps, an' a tongue
 like a mowin' machine.
 She al'ays reminded me of a sumach
 when it's turned in th' Autumn,
 Sort o' harsh an' bright. You couldn't
 see nothin' else
 When she was around, but she warn't th'
 easy kind,
 Her nerves was like a bundle o' fire-
 crackers,
 An' it didn't take no slow-match to light
 'em.
 She could do anythin' she set her hand
 to,
 But she made such a touse doin' it
 You'd full as lives not have it done.
 Amos found quite a bit o' money wait-
 in' for him in th' Wiltshire bank,
 An' he found th' store in extra good
 shape,
 So th' first thing he done was to buy a
 house.
 Not th' one you see, that didn't come
 till later,
 Th' third house from th' post-office was
 his.
 Then he took Tom Wetherbee into part-
 nership
 An' moved into his new house, an' things
 begun.
 They begun with a vengeance, but we
 didn't know nothin' for some time.
 Th' house, maybe you noticed, stands
 quite a piece above th' road.
 Did you see anythin' queer 'bout th'
 grass either side th' steps?
 Well, that was 'cause Amos an' Mrs.
 couldn't come to no agreement 'bout
 fixin' up th' lawn.

He set by a straight slope an' she wanted terraces,
 So they had a straight slope to one side an' terraces to th' other.
 Amos made a joke of it, but Mrs. Amos she made a grievance;
 She made most everythin' a grievance.
 She was al'ays runnin' roun' an' tattlin' aginst Amos.
 I expect she had one o' them tongues they say's hung in th' middle;
 If one end got tired, all she had to do was let it be an' go right along with th' other.
 When she warn't scoldin' Amos, she was scoldin' 'bout him.
 But in th' end 'twarn't him as give, t'was her.
 She up an' runned away, boarded th' afternoon train to Boston.
 One day while he was mindin' th' shop. When Amos found out she'd gone
 He got Bill Rivers (Rivers kep' th' livery stable then) to hitch up his Morgan mare in a couple o' shakes
 An' drive him over to th' junction, lickety split, to catch th' night train from Fitchburg.
 He ketch'd it all right, but 'twas nip an' tuck,
 Th' conductor was hollerin' "All aboard!" when they come in sight o' th' depot.
 I mind Rivers was some put out 'cause Amos didn't say a single word
 All th' way over,
 Didn't even think to thank him when he got him ther'.

Amos was back in a little over a week. But he didn't bring Mrs. Amos with him. Luke went up to see him right away,
 An' he told Luke Mrs. Amos had gone for a stewardess on a Halifax steam-boat.
 She had th' sea in her blood, he said,
 An' he guessed she couldn't be happy livin' so far from it.
 It seems she was a New Bedford woman, An' all her folks had been whalers.
 Everybody supposed as how Amos would sell his house an' shop
 An' go an' settle somewheres his wife would like.
 But he didn't do no such thing.
 He just hung on, lookin' as gloomy as a rainy Fourth o' July;

An' he kep' a-hangin', neither here nor ther' exactly,
 He didn't seem fixed to stay, an' he didn't go.
 Things went on like that for more'n a year,
 An' then Amos bought that parcel o' land to th' Four Corners, an' put up th' house you see.
 When 'twas finished, he sold th' old house an' moved in.
 He drove into town every day to th' store,
 But folks didn't go out to see him.
 He'd turned terrible glum an' pemickety.
 An' Luke was th' only man on real terms with him.
 You couldn't git anythin' out o' Luke, He was mum as a fish,
 That's how we didn't come to hear 'bout Mrs. Richards bein' with Amos.
 Till she'd been ther' quite a spell.
 I dunno's we'd ever have heerd but for Bill Rivers drivin' some Summer boarders
 Up Hog Back one August afternoon.
 One o' th' ladies had a faintin' fit or somethin',
 An' Rivers stopped to Amos's to ask if she couldn't rest ther' while th' others went on.
 He was took all aback when Mrs. Richards come out.
 Rivers was a awful talker,
 He'd twist a bit o' news under his tongue same as if 'twas a chew o' tobaccoer
 An' I never see a man take such relish in spreadin' it.
 So th' whole town knowed 'bout Mrs. Richards 'fore he'd been back an hour.
 You know how folks be, once git a story started
 An' it's off rampagin' like a forest fire,
 Somebody said Luke'd know, an' two or three went up to Luke's
 An' asked him.
 But Luke just said "Why not? Amos had to have some one to do for him,
 An' Mrs. Richards was a respectable widow from Millbridge."
 Ther' warn't no gainsayin' that. when Luke pointed it out.
 But what folks don't say ain't al'ays a handle to what they thinks.

Luke was a real smart man, an' he
 wouldn't listen to a word against her
 an' Amos,
 An' nobody darsn't say a thing to Amos
 himself nat'rally.
 So it went on. Amos had a hired house-
 keeper, said Luke;
 Amos had somethin' he shouldn't have
 had, said others.
 But that was only hearsay, an' Mrs.
 Richards' husband had been th' post-
 master to Millbridge for years
 Until he'd been took off by th' pneumonia
 three years before,
 An' left nothin'.
 "So his widow had to work," said Luke's
 friends.
 Amos's friends didn't say nothin' seein'
 he didn't rightly have any,
 Barrin' Luke, but that was enough.
 Luke was a powerful perseverin' man, an'
 wouldn't stand no nonsense.
 But, spite o' Luke, ther' was talk, heaps
 of it.
 You can't keep women from enjoyin' a
 story like that,
 Nor men neither, I guess.
 A good few o' th' boys went out to
 Amos's
 An' they telled how cozy 'twas out ther',
 With white curtains to th' winders
 An' th' chiny on th' dresser all set out
 elegant,
 Nothin' out o' place an' a sort o' cheery
 look to everythin'.
 Amos had planted apple-trees an' they
 was just come to bear.
 Early sugar apples they was, you know
 th' kind,
 Yaller streaked with red an' sweet as
 honey.
 To hear th' talk you'd think no one else
 in th' town
 Had apples. Boys will be boys, even
 when they ain't,
 An' ther' was somethin' 'bout Mrs.
 Richards' menfolk couldn't have
 enough of.
 But Amos didn't turn a hair, he know'd
 his woman.
 'Twas al'ays th' same—apples, an'
 cookies, an' blackberry jam, an' a wel-
 come.
 Amos warn't like th' same man he was
 to th' store,

He'd laugh an' joke, for all th' world like
 he used to do in th' old days,
 'Twas good to hear him.
 Th' women didn't go, though I guess
 they was itchin' to,
 But none on 'em darst begin.
 Women is sticklers for custom,
 An' all that whisperin' made a sort o'
 fence
 They couldn't break through.
 I've sometimes wondered if that ain't th'
 real use o' women,
 To keep things goin' on even an' straight,
 with no bumps an' jumps to onstetle ye
 O' course ther's th' other kind o' women,
 th' Mrs. Amos kind,
 But, praise th' Lord, I ain't had much
 to do with them.
 But, however stiddy they be, women is
 terrible cur'ous critters,
 They can't git along without a deal o'
 worritin' 'bout th' neighbours' con-
 cerns.
 An' I do believe our Parson's wife was
 th' most cur'ous woman ever was.
 She was at th' Parson from mornin' till
 night to go out to Amos's.
 You see she wanted to know how things
 was at first hand,
 But she know'd better'n to say so.
 What she said was that his duty called
 him to go an' see if Amos was a errin'
 man;
 If he kep' a scarlet woman to th' Corners,
 th' Parson ought to try an' git him
 away from her
 An' save his soul.
 'Twas a bitter strong argument to use to
 a Parson,
 An' she used it every day an' all day.
 'Twas clear he wouldn't git no peace till
 he went,
 An' Parson Eldridge loved peace.
 He was a meek little man
 An' didn't hold with pokin' in wher'
 'twarn't agreeable,
 But he had to go, an' he did.
 Mrs. Eldridge must have been mortal dis-
 appointed,
 For all he said when he come back was
 That Amos didn't appear to be livin' in
 sin.
 He didn't say he warn't, mind you,
 But he 'lowed to his wife he couldn't see
 no openin' to start savin' his soul.

"Th' Almighty works in his own ways,"
 he said,
 "An' Amos has had a heavy cross to
 bear."
 He didn't name no names, but it set us
 all to thinkin' o' Mrs. Amos
 An' what a dance she'd led Amos.
 It made us feel sorry for him,
 An' after that we kind o' sidelooked his
 failin'
 If so be as 'twas one,
 An' th' tittle tattle an' speculatin' died
 down.
 Also we was gittin' used to things, I
 guess.
 Well, they kep' that way for a good fif-
 teen year
 An' then one night Amos called th' doc-
 tor on th' telephone.
 His voice was gritty an' shakin', so th'
 doctor said afterwards,
 An' he know'd at once somethin' had
 happened.
 Mrs. Richards was real bad, Amos said,
 Could th' doctor come right away.
 So Dr. Pearson got out his flivver an'
 started for th' Corners.
 'Twas just commencin' to snow, but
 'twarn't so deep th' car couldn't run,
 Nor it warn't so light it didn't matter.
 'Twas one o' them stingin' snow-storms,
 With th' flakes so little you can't hardly
 see 'em
 But drivin' with a awful force.
 That kind o' snow don't seem to lay none
 at first,
 But ther' ain't no melt to it, an' it goes
 on an' on,
 Comin' every way to oncet, an' blowin'
 up into drifts which you can't make
 out wher' they be or ain't till you're
 on 'em.
 One side th' road'll be swep' clear,
 An' th' other all piled up with snow
 higher'n your head,
 An' all th' time you're as good as blind
 'Count o' th' flakes bein' so sharp an'
 sheddin' down so almighty fast.
 Some men wouldn't have gone out,
 Dr. Blake to Millbridge wouldn't, I
 know,
 But Dr. Pearson went wher' he was
 ucceded;
 Battle an' murder an' suddin death
 couldn't stop him if any one was sick.

It took him all of an hour to git to th'
 Corners.
 An' he know'd when he got ther' he
 couldn't git back.
 Amos met him at th' door,
 "I mistake but you're too late, Doctor,"
 says he.
 And so 'twas. Mrs. Richards was dead.
 She'd had a heart attack, and died while
 th' doctor was on his way.
 Th' doctor done what he could just to
 comfort Amos by doin' somethin',
 But in th' end he had to tell him 'twas
 all over.
 Then th' doctor was scared, Amos acted
 so queer.
 He turned as white as marble, an' as
 stiff.
 He stood ther', lookin' down at th'
 bed,
 Lookin' with his eyes like stones o' fire,
 Froze an' burnin' at th' same time.
 He never moved 'em from th' dead face.
 Just stared still as ice, as if he was all
 shelled in it,
 But somethin' hot an' hard was scaldin'
 him inside.
 Th' doctor tried to rouse him, but he
 didn't seem to hear.
 Then th' doctor took his hand an' raised
 it up,
 But when he let it go, it fell down by his
 side agin,
 An' Amos didn't seem to notice that he'd
 took it an' dropped it.
 Dr. Pearson couldn't leave him ther'
 alone,
 An' he couldn't go anyway 'cause o' th'
 storm.
 Th' snow kep' risin' higher an' higher on
 th' winders.
 Th' door was clean blocked, an' when
 mornin' come
 Th' doctor couldn't see his car, 'twas all
 buried in.
 All night long Amos had stood just th'
 same way
 Starin' at th' dead woman.
 He might have been dead himself, or a
 monument.
 He didn't give a sign he was livin'.
 Only ther' was mist on a hand glass th'
 doctor held to his mouth.
 Th' doctor tried to force some coffee
 down his throat,

But his jaw was clinched an' he couldn't
 prize it open
 He tried to throw him over so's he could
 git him layin' down,
 But he couldn't budge him no more'n if
 he'd been a granite boulder
 Seem's he had th' stren'th o' ten men
 Just to keep standin' ther' lookin' at that
 dead body
 'Twas a Sunday night Amos called th'
 doctor,
 An' 'twas Wednesday mornin' afore th'
 storm broke
 An' all that time Amos had stood ther'
 without movin' a muscle,
 Only he'd sort o' shrunk together, not
 stoopin', I don't mean,
 But collapsin' in sideways
 Th' doctor put it he looked brittle
 Like you might snap him in two but
 couldn't overset him nohow
 Maybe 'twas th' sunlight done it The
 sun shone straight in his eyes,
 But he never even winked 'em, just kep'
 on lookin' an' lookin'
 'Bout 'leven o'clock a sleigh come for
 th' doctor
 They'd been tryin' to git to him for two
 days
 But couldn't, th' drifts was so high,
 They'd had to shovel most o' th' way as
 'twas
 When th' doctor let 'em in ('twas th'
 two Fowler boys an' Sam Gould)
 Th' first thing he told 'em was to come
 upstairs an' help him with Amos
 But they hadn't hardly set foot in th'
 room
 When Amos tumbled over on th' floor
 — same as a tree, they said,
 Stiff from head to foot, not limp like a
 man in a faint
 Th' boys picked him up an' laid him on
 th' bed in th' next room,
 An' th' doctor worked over him, but
 'twas hours 'fore he give a sign o'
 life,
 An' when he did, he went right out of
 his head with fever
 He warn't sensible for some days, an' by
 that time th' funeral was over an' done
 with
 They telled him how 'twas when they
 thought he could stand it,
 But he didn't seem to care,

I guess he'd buried her in his mind long
 before,
 Durin' th' storm
 Folks was awful sorry for Amos,
 But he didn't act to take much stock in
 that neither
 He got up an' went about,
 But he didn't go to th' store no more,
 An' he didn't take no steps to git a new
 housekeeper
 Mrs. Eldridge had a string o' middle aged
 women to suggest for th' place,
 But th' Parson kep' her off him some
 how
 I al'ays had a likin' for th' Parson after
 that,
 Mavbc he'd sensed more'n we thought,
 all along
 He was a good man, too good to go in
 terferin' with th' Almighty's doin's,
 An' that's what you can't say o' most
 parsons
 Come Spring, one afternoon when Luke
 Bartlett was workin' in his yard,
 Tinkerin' at a funeral urn for Elder
 Townsend's monument,
 Who should come creepin' in but Amos
 Sears
 Luke was all took aback seem' him
 comin' in so quiet,
 Almost stealin' in, you might say,
 'Cause Amos had shown him pretty plain
 that he didn't set nothin' by seem'
 him
 Luke was a sensitive man, an' Amos
 turnin' from him had hurt him dretful
 Amos crep' up to him, peerin' as if he
 couldn't see very well,
 An' hangin' onto his stick like 'twas a
 third leg he couldn't do without
 "Luke," says he, "Luke, we been old
 friends, you an' me"
 "We have, Amos," says Luke
 "Luke," says Amos agin, "I've had a
 sight to bear in my life"
 "You have, Amos," says Luke
 "'Tis you, Luke, an' you only can ease
 me now, if you will," says Amos, an'
 ther' was tears in his eyes
 Luke seen 'em an' they made him feel
 sick all over,
 Amos warn't one to cry
 Now what do you s'pose it was he wanted
 Luke should do?
 Why, make a gravestone for Mrs

Richards, an' that was all ther' was to it.
 Everythin' went slick as paint till they come to th' inscription;
 Amos had that all writ out nice on a piece of paper
 An' he read it to Luke.
 "Here lies th' body o' Mary Richards,
 Beloved friend an' unlawful wife o' Amos Sears,
 For seventeen years his sole comfort by th' grace o' God.
 Blessed be th' name of th' Lord whose ways are inscrutable.
 Erected by her bereaved husband in th' sight o' Heaven wher' ther's no marriage nor givin' in marriage,
 But joyful meetin' without end for ever an' ever. Amen."
 Luke took th' paper when Amos handed it to him,
 But he couldn't git ahold o' no words quick enough to speak 'em.
 Maybe he'd know'd al'ays, same as Parson Eldridge,
 Maybe he'd thought what he said he did.
 But anyways you look at it that inscription was a baffler.
 Here was Amos givin' himself away to th' whole town.
 He put it to him so, but Amos said he wouldn't keep it hid no more,
 That 'twas like th' burnin' bush to him,
 Th' love they'd bore each other.
 Then Luke argid 'twas sacrilege to ask th' blessin' o' th' Lord for a onsanctified union.
 "Who says 'twarn't sanctified," shouted Amos,
 "She was th' Lord's givin' to lighten th' sorrow He'd set so heavy on me.
 God's just, as I've heerd from the pulpit many a time,
 An' I don't cal'ate you're denyin' it,
 An' He done th' square thing by me.
 I'd be a limpin' coward if I didn't proclaim it to all an' sundry,
 Witness as I be to His mercy an' comprehendin' kindness."
 That was too much for Luke. He was a Godfearin' man,
 An' he thought Amos had gone blasphemin' crazy.
 But Amos hadn't, not then.

They went at it, hammer an' tongs.
 Each talkin' nineteen to th' dozen.
 Then th' pity of it come over Luke.
 An' he said he'd try to see it Amos's way
 An' tell him in a month th' stone'd be near done.
 An' Amos had to do with that for th' time bein'.
 Luke made th' gravestone just as Amos said,
 Of good black slate, with th' top poked up in a little round just big enough for a angel's head,
 An' th' wings reachin' out right an' left underneath —
 Luke had a won'erful knack with angels, he put on most all his stones —
 But when it come to th' inscription, he couldn't stomach it.
 So he just put "Here lies Mary Richards. God's will be done."
 He'd worked it out that them words'd fit anythin' an' they wouldn't shock nobody.
 If Amos was right 'bout th' Almighty's designin', they'd mean that,
 An' if he warn't, they'd mean otherwise.
 They'd come in handy either way.
 Then he went an' set it up himself.
 I guess he was kind o' afear'd Amos might break it or somethin'.
 Well, th' month was up by then, an' he had to give his answer to Amos.
 I dessay he didn't look forward to it any.
 But Luke warn't th' man to shirk a duty,
 An' that very evenin', soon's supper was over, he started for th' Corners.
 Luke never telled what happened that night, but I know for a fact that him an' Amos never spoke agin.
 Ther' warn't much time for speakin', as a matter o' fact,
 For 'twas th' next 'Tuesday I went up to th' graveyard.
 I don't mind now why, I hadn't buried none o' my folks for years.
 Butt I did go up, an' wandered round for a spell,
 An' all of a suddin I come on Mrs. Richards' grave.
 I didn't know nothin' 'bout th' inscription,
 Luke didn't say anythin' 'bout it till 'twas all over,

So 'twarn't that made me look at th'
stone.
Then I couldn't scarcely b'lieve my eyes,
Th' stone was all writ over with red
letters.
First I thought they was blood,
But then I see they was red chalk runnin'
straight between th' lines Luke had cut.
Yes, Sir, you've guessed it. 'Twas Amos's
inscription,
Fixed so's to read right along with Luke's;
An' Luke's letters was chalked too, it
looked all of a piece a little ways off.
'Thinks I, th' man who could do that must
be goin' through blazes,
His gricvin' must have plumb crazed him,
I guess 'twould be a Christian act to go
an' see how he be.
I warn't anxious for goin', but I didn't
see how any decent man
Could leave them letters an' just go off
home.
I'll never forgit that drive to th' Corners,
never.
Every tree I passed looked so's I'd never
seen it till that minit,
They stuck out at me an' made me
notice 'em,
I can almost tell you how many leaves
ther' was to every branch.
An' ther' was th' Ford chuggin' away,
An' th' thrushes singin' their sunset songs,
An' th' sun goin' down behind Hog Back.
My! How black th' mountain was with
th' sky turnin' all kinds o' colours be-
hind it,
An' th' air comin' cool an' damp when
we struck th' shadow o' th' mountain!
'Twas all shadow to Amos's, but back
yonder t'other side o' th' valley was
full o' sun,
It holds a good hour longer down ther'.
I jumped out o' th' car an' knocked on
th' door,
But nobody answered.
Then I done th' same as you did, I peeked
int' th' winders.
But I couldn't see if Amos was inside
or not.
In th' end I just made bold an' opened
th' door.
Red chalk, did I say?
Red, an' white, an' green, an' blue, an'
purple chalk!
'Twas chalk, chalk, all roun' th' room!

An' 'twas ships done with chalk!
Ther' was a steamboat fightin' waves as
tall as th' funnels,
Roarin' over her they was, with a noise
like artill'ry,
I swear I heerd 'em, an' I sensed she'd
be swamped in a minit.
'Twas a rackin' thing to watch her strug-
glin' to keep up
With no more chance than a fly under
a pump-spout.
An' another steamboat (they was all
steamboats) runnin' on rocks, black
rocks, with red an' green waves dashin'
th' ship onto 'em.
Th' next was th' ship goin' to pieces,
An' th' waves was all full o' people clingin'
to bits of wood.
Some was hangin' on a little longer,
some was drownin' as you looked.
I can't describe how awful 'twas.
One ship was afire, with great tongues
o' yaller flame bustin' through black
smoke.
Not another vessel was near, just th'
heavin' sea wallowin' in th' glitter o'
th' flames.
Ther' was a steamer struck by a bolt o'
lightnin',
Riv' clear down th' middle, an' th' crew
was takin' to th' life-boats,
An' th' life-boats was over-loaded an'
sinkin' as fast as they was launched.
I was cold all over with lookin' 'fore I
come to th' last,
An' that was th' worst of all.
'Twas a dismasted hulk driftin' with th'
run o' th' waves,
Only ther' warn't no waves, th' ocean was
calm,
So calm it made you want to scream.
Dawn was comin', an' th' light was just
showin' that ther' was a ocean at all,
But 'twarn't no good to see it for ther'
warn't nothin' to see but it.
'Twas done pretty big, an' you could
make out ther' was somebody on th'
ship,
An' that 'twas a woman.
Somehow you know'd she was all th'
folks ther' was,
An' th' hulk had drifted out o' th' way
o' other ships,
An' that 'twas just goin' to float along
like that with th' woman on it

Till th' food give out an' she died o' starvation.
 By that time I was in a sweat all over.
 There was a lonesomeness an' a down-
 night nastiness 'bout them picters
 I can't describe to ye,
 But you'd have felt it too, if you'd seen 'em.
 I'm glad you didn't, I wouldn't wish any
 one to be haunted by 'em same as I
 been.
 I'd just finished an' was startin' all over
 agin 'cause I couldn't keep from it,
 When Amos come in.
 "You didn't know I could do nothin'
 like that, did you?" says Amos,
 Beginnin' in th' middle, with not so much
 as a "How d'you do" to set things
 goin'.
 "No," says I, "I didn't. Be these your
 doin'?"
 "They be," says he. "I'm pretty smart
 at drawin' now.
 I guess ther's more in a man than he
 knows till he tries."
 I didn't answer, not findin' what to say,
 But he didn't notice that.
 "I been at it all Winter," he says,
 "Quick as I worked out a new way for
 th' sea to kill
 I slapped it down on th' wall yonder.
 I guess I ain't left out a single one; if I
 learn I have, I'll put it on th' ceilin'.
 Curse that woman! One on 'em must
 strike!
 Th' sea's so notional at killin' 'twon't
 leave her be much longer,
 Stan's to reason she's nearin' her term.
 Eighteen year she's been at it, temptin'
 it an' floutin' it
 Same's she's flouted me.
 Th' sea won't desert me th' way Luke
 done,
 Th' sea'll be my friend.
 Ain't I prayed to it every night an' mornin'
 To git her quick.
 I shall go mad 'fore long if somethin'
 don't happen.
 Joshua"—an' he grabbed my arm—"you
 think it'll git her pretty soon, don't
 ye?"
 I was scared, Mr. Day, scared to hear him
 sayin' such things.
 He was tremblin' from head to foot, an'
 his eyes had a mean, dry look in 'em

I'd never see in nobody's.
 "Amos," I says, "be you speakin' o' your
 wife?"
 "You tarnation fool!" says he, droppin'
 my arm an' ragin' off roun' th' room,
 "Of course I be. If I warn't a God damn
 coward, I'd kill her with my own hands.
 But th' sea's my depity; I've appointed
 it in my place, an' I'm just waitin' for
 news.
 An' I'll wait till Hog Back's a valley, an'
 don't you go doubtin' it."
 I didn't doubt, I was beginnin' to know
 Amos,
 But what he said riled me so, I couldn't
 keep from hollerin' out:
 "God in Heaven, man, don't you know
 she was drowned in a wreck two year
 ago!"
 "Twarn't right to tell him like that, an'
 I was ashamed to th' marrer at what
 I'd done th' minit after,
 For Amos went down as if he'd been
 shot.
 You see, Mr. Day, he couldn't git a
 divorce
 'Count o' havin' signed a paper agreein'
 to a separation when his wife left him,
 An' that queered his case accordin' to
 law.
 An' here he might ha' been married to
 Mrs. Richards for two years anyway,
 If he'd ha' know'd.
 I can't think how he didn't, 'cept that
 'twas in a Portland paper I read it
 One time when I was down that way.
 'Twas enough to upset any man comin'
 on him suddin like that,
 But I warn't prepared for his way o'
 takin' it.
 I hadn't had time to think o' th' half
 o' what I'm tellin' you
 When he was up an' rummin' at me with
 a chair,
 "Get out!" he screamed, "yon get out or
 I'll smash you into hell."
 Chair for chair, I was no match for him,
 It was just dodge an' run for me.
 When I got to the door I made a dash
 for it,
 An' I'd just got my car goin' when he
 reached me,
 But a motor on high ain't a thing to fool
 with
 An' I got away.

I druv for all th' car was worth to Parson
 Eldridge's
 An' telled him th' whole story.
 He got a posse o' men together an' off
 we all went back to Amos's.
 But we couldn't find him anywheres
 about th' place.
 Parties searched th' woods, and th' ponds
 was dragged,
 But we never come on a thing, not till
 this day.
 Nobody knows if he's dead or livin'.
 All th' towns for miles was notified,
 But he warn't never found,
 No one ain't ever see hair or hide of him
 since that day.
 That was six Summers come next,
 An' anybody you don't know's dead ain't
 lawfully such for I don't know how
 many years,
 So nothin' couldn't be done with his
 effects.
 Ther' stood th' house an' them fearsome
 picters
 Any one could see 'em through th' winders
 if they was lookin' for 'em,
 An' they was scary as I can't tell ye.
 It got to be a dare with th' little fellers
 to go out an' peek,
 An' some o' th' boys couldn't sleep nights
 for 'em.
 After John Baxter's youngest screamed
 himself into fits,
 Th' selectmen took it on themselves to
 order th' walls papered.
 'Twouldn't injure his property none to
 put it on, they 'lowed,
 He could rip it off when he come back,
 if he'd a mind to.
 Th' house must ha' been jerrybuilt to
 have fell away so in th' time,
 But that was kind o' like Amos's life,
 warn't it?
 'Twas jerrybuilt clear through, I guess.
 But you just thank your stars for them
 rosebuds, that's all.

THE CONVERSION OF A SAINT

"Why, Sallie Williams,
 I'm proper glad to see ye.
 Go straight in t' th' clock-room,
 I blazed a fire in ther' this afternoon to
 take th' chill off
 An' it's nice an' warm.

Now you set right down in th' red plush
 rocker
 An' git your breath,
 You look all beat out.
 Just you set still an' rest
 And I'll run out t' th' kitchen
 And git ye a good strong cup o' tea an'
 some cookies.
 I won't be a minute."

"You're real good, Lidy,
 But I don't hold with snacks between
 meals,
 Never did, an' I don't dar'st begin now.
 Th' tea'll be enough an' plenty.
 I been a long walk
 An' I do feel a mite tired."

"I'll leave th' door open
 So's we can talk through.
 It's been some consid'able time since you
 was here,
 All of two months, I do b'lieve.
 I was goin' to git Oren to drive me into
 town
 For a visit with you one o' these days.
 However did you happen out here?
 On foot too.
 We ain't so young as we was, you an'
 me."

"We ain't, Lidy, that's a fact,
 Though I keep pretty spry, consid'rin'."

"It's awful ugly footin' this time o' year,
 Th' roads ain't dry yet.
 A couple more weeks should harden 'em.
 Now you just drink that,
 I made it fire-strong a-purpose,
 As Father used to say."

"It's real revivin',
 I feel better a'ready."

"To think o' your trapesin' way out here,
 An' in your best magenta silk too.
 I must say I take it very kind.
 But 'pears like we be gittin' strangers
 When you have to dress up for me."

"To tell th' truth, Lidy,
 You ain't just th' reason I put on this
 dress.
 I had another,
 But I'm most afraid to tell it."

"Don't you be silly, an' le' me take your cup.

This ain't no time o' day to be keepin' things from me.

Wa'n't you th' first I told

When I brought my mind to marry Oren,
An' ain't I been sharin' my troubles with ye ever since!

You got somethin' on your mind, Sallie,
I thought as much when you first come in.

Now you tell me right out what 'tis.
We're old to be hangin' back with one another

An' I'm bound to git it sooner or later.
If you didn't come out a-purpose to see me

What did you come for?

Ther' ain't nobody else to visit out this way

As I'm aware."

"Ther's a lot o' folks, Lidy,
Only they're dead.
You're forgittin' th' buryin'-ground."

"Sakes alive! What be you a-doin' to th' buryin'-ground?

I didn't know you ever went near it
'Cep' on Decoration Day."

"I never did before.
I wanted to see Miss Ziba's grave."

"Miss Ziba's grave!
Well, you do take me all aback.
I al'ays thought you hated her."

"Hate ain't no word for th' way I felt 'bout that woman.
That's why I wanted to see her grave."

"I don't sense your meanin', Sallie.
You'd best begin right at th' beginnin'
An' tell me straight through."

"I guess I'll have to.
It's previn' on me somethin' awful.
What's done's done, an' I'm glad,
But I'm kind o' scared too.
Lidy, you promise you won't tell a soul,
Not even Oren."

"I won't if it'll ease you. Ther'!
Now you git it right out, dear,
I'm listenin'."

"You mind th' trouble, Lidy?"

"Don't I? Why even us girls was all sides 'bout it.

I've never had nothin' to do with Hannah Williams
Nor Addie Belle Dyer since."

"Well, that trouble sp'iled my life.
I never telled you how it laid on me.
I couldn't bring myself to speak on't even to you.

But it's been a dwellin' horror all my life,
Like a ghost-story,
Only 'twas I was ha'nted, not a house.
It begun when I was goin' on ten year old.

Miss Ziba'd al'ays been friendly with my folks,

I used to call her Aunt Ziba.

She made lovely paper-dolls;

Many's th' Sat'day afternoon I spent over to her home

Playin' with 'em.

An' an old doll's-house she had when she was a little girl.

Then all at once it come, th' quarrel.

Mother telled me I wa'n't never to go to Miss Ziba's agin.

I mind how she looked when she said it,

Not like Mother at all, but a stranger.
That look chilled me clear to th' marrow.

I git th' shivers now, thinkin' of it.

'Twas as if Mother was hid away an' someone else'd took her place.

I ain't never had a shock to beat that.
So lonely as 'twas, an' never been nothin' else since, not once.

I ran away up garret an' cried all afternoon.

I don't run now.

Habit keeps folks quieter if that's all it does.

One day I met Miss Ziba out walkin'

An' she stared right through me as if I wa'n't ther'.

That made me feel creepy

As though I wa'n't ther' myself.

O' course in a village like ours

You can't help meetin's,

But I never got used to Miss Ziba actin's
though she could put her foot right down on me

An' feel th' boards under, just th' same.

I used to look in t' th' windows o' Mr.
Gale's shop

To see if I could see myself in 'em
After she'd gone by.

Then th' girls begun.

Addie Belle took a notion to stick her
tongue out at me

Whenever Miss Price's back was turned.
She'd do it a dozen times a forenoon.

An' then she an' Hannah Williams'd
h'ist up their desk tops, an' whisper
an' giggle behind 'em

Till Miss Price ketched 'em at it.

Tricky wa'n't th' word for them two.

Hannah'd say she wanted a drink an' ast
to go out to th' well;

She had to pass me to git to th' door,
An' goin' an' comin' she'd give me a
nasty pinch.

I'd ha' complained to Miss Price, only
I darsn't,

Knowin' ther' was somethin' 'bout me,
Somethin' terrible, an' 'couldn't guess
what.

If it hadn't ha' been for you an' one or
two o' th' others

I think I'd ha' died for shame."

"Why, Sallie dear, you're tremblin'.

I hadn't no knowledge you took it so
hard.

We wouldn't let Addie Belle or Hannah
See our poppy-shows, I remember.

You said they shouldn't see yours for a
whole packet o' pins.

I've laughed over it lots o' times since."

"I expect you thought my dander was
up, Lidy,

An' it ought to ha' been.

But th' peth was all gone out o' me,

I wanted to cry all th' time,

An' I wouldn't ha' gone to school

Only Mother made me."

"What was it all about anyway?

I don't b'lieve I ever heerd."

"That's th' awful part.

I don't know no more'n th' dead.

I ast Mother once, but she wouldn't say
a word,

An' th' look she give me settled me not
to ast agin,

'Twas like th' first time only worse.

Mother an' me wa'n't never th' same
after.

I couldn't feel to love her like I should
With that secret in between."

"Sallie! You don't say!

An' you an' your Mother livin' alone
together twenty year;

It must ha' been all o' that."

"It was, twenty-three.

We lived together, but we didn't speak,
Not really speak, I mean.

I used myself for her hard as I could,
But that was all ther' was to it.

I've al'ays been good at flourishin' flowers
An' Mother liked a posy by her bed,

But them flowers was th' nearest we come
to speakin'.

I wa'n't no lonelier after she died

Than I was with her livin'.

Did I hate Miss Ziba, Lidy?

'Tis past expressin', I tell ye.

Wa'n't it her took my Mother away
from me,

An' all th' youth an' splendour I'd a
right to?

Girls needs cossetin' all through th'
growin' years

But I didn't never have any,

An' I just lost heart for gay times an'
junketin's.

I was a sort o' Ishmael to my own seemin'.

I read his story every night 'fore I went
to bed one Winter,

He got to be a kind o' blood cousin,
An' th' thought of ther' bein' another

of us comforted me some.

If it hadn't ha' been for you, Lidy—

But ther', if it hadn't been so between
us

I wouldn't be here now, tellin' ye.

Don't mind me, dear, tears is a help
sometimes,

An' I feel dretful low-sperited."

"But what about th' buryin'-ground,
Sallie?"

"Yes, th' buryin'-ground. I'm comin' to
that.

When I heerd last Tuesday Miss Ziba
was dyin'

It acted like a crust broke up in me
somewheres,

I was so rej'iced 'twas like a jubilee.
 I tried to pray against it,
 But 'twa'n't no use.
 I was as happy as though I'd heerd
 trumpetin' angels
 Callin' me to dance before th' ark,
 Th' way they done in th' Bible.
 I couldn't go to th' buryin', nat'rally,
 But I watched it from th' garret window
 Windin' up along,
 An' when I couldn't see it no more
 I went an' got out this dress
 An' pressed it nice an' tidy, an' put new
 lace to th' neck an' sleeves.
 Ther' was somethin' I had to do, Lidy.
 You needn't feel obleeged to remark it
 none,
 'Cause I had to do it.
 I'd got to feelin' old scores must be paid,
 An' I was goin' to pay 'em for keeps.
 I waited a couple o' days
 Till I 'lowed all th' tendin' an' visitin'd
 be done
 An' nothin' left to fix but th' stone,
 An' you couldn't expect that for some
 weeks;
 Asa Frye makes real pleasin' stones, but
 he's slow.
 When I got up this mornin' an' see
 what a day 'twas,
 With th' wind Southerly an' th' snow-
 drops up an' noddin',
 I know'd 'twas just time.
 So I dressed me all up,
 Same's I planned,
 An' come right along up here to th'
 buryin'-ground.
 I can't go on, Lidy.
 It's too dretful now.
 Don't, don't let me go on.
 Lidy, you mustn't let me go on,
 I can't do it."

"There now, dearie, don't you fret.
 You better tell it all out,
 It's th' holdin' in's hurtin' ye.
 What'd you do, Sallie?
 I want to know complete."

"It's awful, Lidy,
 A great deal more awful'n you'd think
 'twould be.
 I walked right up to Miss Ziba's grave
 an'—kicked it.
 Th' earth was all soft, o' course,

An' mounded up th' way they al'ays
 leaves 'em.
 I kicked that soft loam hard's ever I
 could,
 An' I kep' kickin' till I made a big hole.
 When I got through I felt as light as
 air,
 All my hate was gone.
 I was all full up with lovin' kindness.
 Then I went to work an' filled up that
 hole with my bare hands
 An' come right over to you.
 Oh, Lidy, don't look at me like that!
 I had to do it, an' I feel so happy,
 So diff'rent from common,
 Like ther' was was wings on my feet
 An' my eyes peerin' to a sunrise."

"But 'twas wicked, Sallie,
 A wicked, wicked thing.
 I don't see how you, a church member,
 Could bring yourself to do such a thing."

"Neither do I.
 Half of me's just as shocked as you
 be,
 But th' other half's so glad I could clap
 my hands."

"Don't, Sallie.
 It ain't like you.
 'Tis a very wrong thing to meddle with
 a grave.
 Oh, whatever shall you do now
 With such a mem'ry?
 Poor little Sallie!
 Poor child! I can't see my way at all."

"Now don't you go on like that, Lidy.
 Half of me's happy an' I ain't wishful to
 lose it.
 You were plumb right.
 Tellin' you's done me a heap o' good.
 Th' happy half's drownin' out th' other
 quicker every minute.
 What am I goin' to do?
 I settled that when I was pressin' out
 my dress.
 I'm goin' to take in boarders.
 I do enjoy havin' company around.
 I sent a couple o' notices to the Boston
 papers yesterday.
 I'll bring th' answers right along to you
 Soon's I git any.
 P'raps I can git a real nice young man,

An' maybe a mother an' daughter.
 I should love to have a romance goin'
 on
 Right under my own roof.
 That house has had nothin' but gloomy
 things happen in it
 Long's I can remember.
 Now I'm goin' to give it smilin' things
 if I can git to do it."

"But, Sallie, what will th' minister say?
 You can't go on goin' to meetin'
 With this on your mind.
 You'll have to tell him."

"I shan't do no such a thing.
 I guess I'll give up goin' to meetin' for a
 spell.

I been steady at it all my life,
 But I can't see's any good come from
 it.

I'm goin' to be a errin' sperit for th'
 rest o' my days,
 Hell can't be no worse nor what I've had;
 Anyhow, I'm goin' to resk it.

If th' boardin' works, maybe I'll take a
 house down to Boston

An' keep at it Winters.
 Oh, we're goin' to have a beautiful time,
 Lidy!

An' I'll git my folks to hire Oren's auto-
 mobile for picnics an' things.

My! If ther' ain't Oren now, drivin' in
 t' th' barn.

I must be goin' on along home.

Don't you tell him, Lidy.

If I'm goin' to live with a sin on my
 conscience

Th' fewer knows it th' better.

An' don't you worrit 'bout me a mite,
 Like's not I'll be sorry as can be one o'
 these days,

But I can't see my way to it now.

I'll be up agin soon's th' answers come.
 Ain't th' snow-drops lovely with th' moon
 on 'em?

I don't know as I rec'lect a forwarder
 Spring,

Ther'll be cherry-blows in next to no
 time.

No, I won't stay, dear.

I'll just git me a bit o' supper,

An' set that new knittin' stitch on a
 needle 'fore I go to bed.

I'm so glad I come in."

THE GRAVESTONE

"That was a funny thing. I guess you
 were startled
 Finding it that way underneath the stairs,"

"Startled I was, and something a good
 deal more.

For I was thinking of nothing but my
 ball

And how I couldn't say that I had lost
 it

Not being allowed to play with it in-
 doors.

I didn't want a licking or a lecture,
 But mightily I wanted back my ball,
 And fumbling round there in the dark
 I touched

Stone, shivering stone, a cold long stretch
 of slate,

Waist-tall, about, going clear down to the
 floor.

I hardly dared to trust the feel of it,
 So I struck a match and there it was,
 a head-stone

With writing on it, good, square, march-
 ing letters;

I saw that much before the match went
 out.

The dark was rather awful afterwards.

Being twelve years old by our Bible, and
 a healthy chap,

I didn't really suppose that any one
 Was buried there under Grandfather's
 staircase,

But I couldn't help thinking a little it
 might be so.

It might—and then I went and got a
 candle.

Of course there wasn't any grave; the
 stone

Just stood there, leaning up against the
 stair-back,

Dusty the way old furniture is dusty,
 House-dust, you know, not weather-dust,
 no rain

Had run its mark upon it, top to bottom;
 There were no bird-stains, nor snail trails,
 nor anything

Like creeper smears, it might have been
 a table

Without its legs, shoved out of the way
 in there,

But for the letters. They were plain
 enough,

And so I read them: 'Here lies the mortal body
 Of Joseph Crocker, entered into rest . . .'
 After that came a gap with nothing on it,
 Where the surface was all neatly scraped
 and chiselled
 So that the date was gone, but down
 below
 I read again: 'Beloved Son of Joel
 And Maryum Crocker,' and then there
 came some poetry,
 A hymn, I think, but I don't remember
 that;
 My mind was taken up with Joseph
 Crocker
 Whose tombstone stood here like a
 table-top
 Gathering household dust under the stairs.
 I crept out, sober enough, as you may
 think,
 And left the ball behind me with the
 stone.
 A stone without a grave didn't seem
 religious;
 It shocked me, and I couldn't figure why.
 I didn't like the fact of its being there,
 With all the family going up and down
 Over the legend of a 'mortal body,'
 Which wasn't there as it should have
 been, and shouldn't;
 That would be worse, of course, and yet
 more fitting.
 It was rather a nasty riddle for a boy
 Of twelve, set down so in the family
 Bible,
 And as the sixth James Crocker. But that
 was why
 I knew immediately I couldn't take it
 As an omen or anything like that. I
 couldn't
 Recollect a single Joseph. We had Johns,
 And Amoses and Joels, and lots of others,
 But not a Joseph could I bring to mind.
 Yet it would seem that once there must
 have been one,
 For people don't keep gravestones as
 ornaments
 With fancy names on them, at least, not
 now,
 Perhaps they used to, that I didn't know.
 I didn't like it anyway, and after a time
 I liked it so little I screwed my courage
 up
 To speak to Grandfather. How well I
 see

The old book-room, with the October
 sun
 Shining on gold and leather up and down
 The walls, and getting a sort of extra
 spryness
 From the crimson maple-leaves outside
 the window.
 The fire, a sunny fire, crackled and tried
 To burn with solar brilliance, and impress
 As white a star in the balls of the brass
 andirons.
 Grandfather was smoking and reading as
 he always did
 Just before sunset until supper time.
 I sidled in and wandered round the room
 Staring at the book-backs I knew by
 heart,
 And fingering the pistols Great Uncle
 John
 Had used in Egypt on his famous tour,
 And pretty soon Grandfather saw me
 there.
 'Well, Jim,' said he, taking his spectacles
 off,
 'What do you want here at this time of
 day?'
 That was a good beginning, I knew the
 signs,
 Twelve years might say a word to seventy
 When seventy laid its spectacles aside.
 I ventured round the table and sat down
 Gingerly in the writing-table chair,
 And perching on its edge I said my word.
 Somewhat in haste as doing a fearful
 thing,
 And one not altogether warranted,
 But which admitted of a subtle doubt
 As to its perfect impropriety.
 Armed with this doubt to cover my in-
 trusion,
 If such it were, on ground where tres-
 passers
 Would not be welcomed, I advanced my
 query.
 'Grandfather,' said I, for I was in it then,
 Committed to the hazard of even chances,
 'Why do you keep a gravestone under
 the stairs?'
 My ears sang in the silence that came
 after.
 The ticking of the banjo clock on the
 chimney
 Was brass and fury banging on chill
 doom.
 The fire roared like a great conflagration.

But Grandfather put his finger-tips together
 And carefully tapped them one upon another.
 Then he looked up and smiled, and with a sigh
 I settled my unbroken back against the chair-back,
 Wondering a little, but vastly comforted,
 And found the fire good, and the sun most pleasant,
 And thought how pretty all the gold and calf-skin
 Book-backs were looking, and the maple-tree
 Crimson-red, standing outside the window.
 'So you've found the tombstone,' Grandfather was saying,
 When I got back enough to listen to him
 After considering the beauty of the world
 And all its special attributes just there
 And then, where I was at the moment sitting.
 'It's a curious tale, my boy, but you shall have it,
 It will tell you something of your family.
 You know, of course, we're comfortably off,
 Very well off indeed. Well, we owe that
 To thrifty forebears. Prudence was their motto.
 They saved their pennies, perhaps a bit too much
 For modern notions. My great-grandfather
 Was a certain Joel Crocker, a driving man
 Who farmed this place and pulled good crops by force
 Of will out of the rocks, and made them yield
 More profit by double than his neighbours' land,
 Or they themselves, could ever learn the trick of.
 He worked the farm alone with his two sons.
 James, a steady lad, was like his father,
 But Joseph favoured his mother's people more.
 He wasn't wild or bad, but he hated farming,
 And used to steal what time he could to read

Geography, always geography, he was daft about it,
 Could name the cities of China like a teacher,
 And tick off rivers as fast as you could count,
 While as to exports and imports, you couldn't stump him
 Jumping all round the map. He used to draw
 India and Asia from memory, and all the Islands
 That men then knew of in the Pacific Ocean,
 And give them to his mother, and she would frame them
 With bits of silk and ribbon from her piece-bag
 And hang them in her bedroom. It didn't please Joel
 'To have him do it, but after all 'twas better
 Than hanging round the store where they kept a bowl
 Of rum punch on the counter all the time.
 So Joel said nothing, and Joseph made his maps.
 One Winter, James came down with a sudden fever.
 Three days sufficed, poor chap, for him to turn
 His toes up, and there was an end of James,
 The very darling of his father's heart.
 Old Joel was staggered, James was more than the apple
 Of his eye, more like the eye itself he was,
 The ripe, sweet kernel of his father's soul.
 As I have said, Joel was a thrifty man,
 And hated like blazes to part with hard-earned money;
 But James, the rapture of his life, was dead.
 He had not given much to James when living,
 It had not been his way, but now he grieved
 At things he did not speak of, only he went
 A whole day's journey down to Nashua
 To Jacob Crufts, the mason, and ordered a stone
 Of fine blue slate to put at James's grave.

Well, by and by, the stone came home,
but somehow

Jacob had blundered at the name and
carved

"Joseph" where he should have chiselled
"James."

Old Joel was just beside himself to see it.
The whole stone spoilt and the money
gone for nothing.

He loaded that stone into a cart at once,
Although the sun had just that moment
gone

Down behind Greyback. He wouldn't
wait for supper

He was so angry, but took it in a pail,
And jogged the night long down to
Nashua,

And there he got at dawn, fussed as a
rooster

All spurred and spanked up for a cocking
bout.

Crufts was in bed, but Joel had him
out

In no time, and standing with him in the
street,

He damned and tongue-lashed very hand-
somely,

Not caring a brass farthing who might
hear.

He told Crufts he had ordered plainly
"James."

But Crufts said "No, 'twas Joseph was
the name."

Joel said that couldn't be, he never
thought

Of Joseph, never, and he always thought
of James,

And more than usual now that he was
dead.

Crufts didn't know anything about that,
of course,

And said so with an acid sullenness.

Business was business, and his was making
gravestones.

Joel, being a father, knew which son was
dead

As he insisted. Crufts, a dogged man,
Replied that might be so or not, he
couldn't say,

But Joseph was the name was given him.
"Joseph's alive," roared Joel. "That's a
pity,"

Admitted Crufts, "for it's a handsome
stone."

Joel said he wouldn't pay a cent for it.

Crufts might have it back, but Crufts
declared

It was no use to him, which fact indeed
was evident. Finally when they'd been
at it

Hot and heavy for an hour or more,
Crufts was visited by inspiration.

"But you have a son named Joseph," he
shouted out,

"And he'll die some day, keep the stone
for him."

Joel, indignant, pointed to the date.
"He'll die some time," he said, "but not
that time."

"That's passed." A quivering argument to
plant

In the other's bosom. Poor Crufts
scratched his head.

Then suddenly he swore, "By Gum! I
have it!

The date's done shaller, I can cut it
out.

You take the stone at half price, and set
it by

Till such time as it's needed. And I'll
make another

And put 'James' on it right as a trivet
this time."

So the bargain was struck with no great
satisfaction

On either side, but the best that could be
done.

The stone with "James" was set up in
the graveyard,

And the "Joseph" stone put by for later
use.

Now whether it was the presence of his
gravestone

Here in the house, or the lonesomeness
now James

Was gone, or what it was, Joseph grew
moody.

He couldn't stand the farm, he almost
sickened

At staying on it, and one fine Summer
morning

He ran away to Portsmouth and went to
sea.

He came back three years later for a
week,

But after that he never came again.
And they heard at last that his ship and
every soul

On board of her was lost. Joel was sorry.
Of course, but no one ever rightly knew

Which he was sorrier for, the loss of
 Joseph
 Or the fact that now he couldn't use the
 tombstone.
 However, after his first grief was over,
 He used to say, "There'll be another
 Joseph
 Some day, and they'll be glad to have
 this gravestone
 Handy, so they won't have to buy an-
 other."
 But he was wrong, there's been no other
 Joseph,
 It seems like flying in the face of Fate
 To give a boy a name that's on a tomb-
 stone,
 As if you put him like money in a bank
 Waiting until it's called for. No Crocker
 woman
 Would name a son of hers Joseph. No,
 Jim,
 There never will be another Joseph
 Crocker.
 Then I, with all the bravery of twelve,
 Rose from my chair and solemnly averred
 That I would name my first son Joseph.
 But
 I have not kept that vow, though I've
 five sons.
 Do you think my wife would ever agree
 to Joseph?
 A bachelor is prodigal with vows,
 Wait till you're married, my friend, and
 you will see."

THE REAL ESTATE AGENT'S TALE

The furniture goes with the house. Oh,
 yes.
 There ain't no silver, but silver's never
 let,
 At least I never heard of that being
 done.
 There's lots of dishes though, and only
 a few
 Are cracked or chipped, the owner was
 very careful.
 She washed her plates as though they
 were her babies,
 And everything's spick and span, just as
 she left it.
 Maybe you'll want a little bit more com-
 fort
 In your chairs. But you can send up one
 or two

If these don't suit, and probably a spring
 sofa
 For the sitting-room, the one there's hard
 as nails
 And I don't fancy you'll like its horse-
 hair cover,
 Folks don't to-day. My wife couldn't
 abide ours,
 We broke it up for fire-wood long ago.
 It's a pretty place, the more you look it
 over,
 And the rent is very reasonable indeed.
 Now just you let me make a note or two:
 You'll take it as it stands without the
 sofa,
 And you don't want the bed in the East
 Chamber,
 Nor the kitchen things, and you do want
 an ice-chest.
 Nothing more? Well, now, there's just
 one thing
 Which may surprise you, but I wouldn't
 keep
 That clock if I was you. Oh, it goes all
 right.
 It hasn't missed its strike in fifty years.
 I've come here every Sunday and wound
 it up,
 Sam Gould, Miss Bartlett's nephew, told
 me to.
 He's all that's left of the family, he and
 the clock,
 But I don't notice he's sent for it to
 Boston.
 It's a very handsome thing, the sort that
 dealers
 Hunting old furniture can't get enough
 of—
 We have a good few of the tribe up here,
 Nosing about whenever there's an auc-
 tion—
 But for all that I wouldn't want it round.
 I guess I'm mighty poor at real estating
 To say a thing like that, but still I
 wouldn't,
 Not if 'twas me. You needn't laugh, Mr.
 Brooks,
 I've got a funny feeling about that clock.
 I want to let it stop, and tie a rope
 Around it good and tight just where the
 wood
 Juts out to hold the face, and then I want
 To hang it up in the old apple-tree
 Outside my office and let it swing and
 rot

With snow, and rain, and sun, until it drops.
 You think I'm mad, I guess. Well, Sir,
 I'm not.
 But I've got my own ideas about that clock.
 It's a whole hour to train time, if you care
 To hear why I feel so, I'll tell you why.
 That clock's been in the Bartlett family
 Time out of mind, ever since Simon
 Bartlett
 Brought it from England on one of his
 long voyages,
 The longest voyage he ever took and the
 last.
 He was captain of a ship trading the
 Indies,
 Not the West Indies, of course you under-
 stand,
 But the other Indies, off around Cape
 Horn.
 This time he'd been away above two
 years
 And back he came, slapping along as fast
 As winds would blow him, expecting to
 be married
 Soon as his ship had got her anchor down.
 The war of eighteen-twelve was on and
 booming,
 But Cap'n Si didn't know a thing about
 it.
 Until a British ship fired plunk at him.
 He made what fight he could with only
 muskets,
 But the British ship had a bellyful of
 cannon,
 And pretty soon 'twas strike or go down
 flyin',
 So Cap'n Si, being prudent, hauled his
 flag.
 They put a prize crew on him just for
 luck,
 And off he went under the Union Jack,
 And found himself clapped into Dart-
 moor jail,
 With no way of sending word back to his
 Sweetheart
 That he wasn't hobnobbing down with
 Davy Jones.
 They let him out after the war was over.
 He'd made some money carving little
 toys,
 For sailors in those days knew how to
 whittle

And visitors were always keen on buying.
 And I guess he had some more sewed in
 his clothes
 The warden had overlooked. But all his
 keepsakes
 Were gone, the presents he was bringing
 home
 To give his bride. He wouldn't come
 empty-handed,
 He bought this clock, now he had time
 again,
 It seemed to him time had been all
 choked up,
 Clogged somehow, like the wheels of a
 dirty watch,
 While he had been in prison. He might
 have thought
 Amanda would have married, but he
 didn't,
 And she hadn't. So that at least was
 right as rain,
 And they set up housekeeping with the
 clock.
 You bet he wound it every week, he
 wouldn't
 Have let it stop for a hundred thousand
 dollars.
 He'd got time back, and he meant to hold
 on to it.
 He did, being over a hundred when he
 died.
 And I don't suppose the jail seemed more
 than five minutes
 When he looked back. He'd given up
 sea-fearing
 And moved quite a ways inland, to
 Nashua,
 And then on here to Franklin. Here he
 stuck,
 And here his folks have been sticking ever
 since,
 Till Sam Gould went away and Miss
 Bartlett died.
 The Bartlett family just lived by that
 clock.
 You never caught one of them being late
 For meals, or getting up, or going to bed.
 The clock was in at all the goings on.
 No Bartlett woman was married from a
 church,
 They used to stand the minister in front
 Of the clock to marry them, and all the
 guests
 Looked right into that clock face all the
 time

The wedding was going on, and ten to one
 The clock would strike and you couldn't hear a thing
 Was said. It was the same with christenings.
 Every Bartlett baby was baptized
 In front of the clock, and every Bartlett corpse
 Got prayed off into Heaven with that clock
 Tick-tocking up above, and striking too,
 Funerals weren't more serious to Bartletts
 Than the clock's striking. I've heard my mother say
 They purposely arranged to have it so.
 It really was uncanny how their lives
 Moved and circled about that grim old clock.
 Bartletts were born, and Bartletts died,
 but the clock
 Was always the same, it never changed a bit.
 When I was a boy I used to come with Sam
 And stand for hours watching those rocking ships
 Up there. But when Sam's father died and I
 Saw those ships rocking up above his coffin
 They turned me sort of sick, I wanted to smash them.
 That clock was treated as if it was alive,
 And there it stood, grinning with all its ships,
 Not caring a brass farthing what occurred
 To any one. I got a hunch that day
 That the clock had a nasty soul, that it liked to watch
 The family like puppets in a show
 And that some day it would get bored and do
 Some horrid thing. It was a curious fancy,
 Wasn't it? But maybe I was right
 Than I could ever dare believe I was.
 The Bartletts owned a lot of land round here,
 Old Si had spread himself when it came to land.
 Some of it was farm, some woodland, some was nothing,
 And kept as such for a full century.
 I guess the Captain started the first store

They had here. He did a thriving trade
 In groceries, and calicoes, and hardware,
 But somehow the family drifted out of business
 And long before my day they'd sold the store
 And only kept the farm. But the new West
 Cut farming into bits all through this country.
 Only some folks don't know when they've had enough
 And the Bartlett family hated change like poison.
 George Bartlett, having only girls, the neighbours
 Used to wonder what would happen when he died.
 At first, of course, they thought the girls would marry,
 And Jane, the youngest, did — but not a farmer,
 Her husband was the doctor here, and a good one,
 But country practice ain't a roarin' gold mine.
 Still it kept them, and Jerusha found a man
 To rent the farm, and things went on like that
 For a good many years. Then the doctor died
 And left his wife and Sam without a cent.
 Jerusha took them in, but the farm rent
 Didn't go far with three of them, so Jerusha
 Sold off her wood; not the land, you understand,
 But the trees on it. The Diamond Match people
 Sent saw-mills in and cut down everything.
 There were miles and miles looked like the Day of Judgment,
 Stumps, and dead twigs, and rotting chips, and cinders.
 The city folks were mad as hops about it,
 But if Jerusha cared she didn't say so.
 I went to Hanover about that time,
 And then to Law School. How they got the money
 To send Sam down to study pharmacy,
 I've only just found out. They borrowed it,
 And at enormous interest. By that time

Sam's mother had died, and there was just those two,
Sam and Miss Bartlett, with the measly farm rent

To carry them. Miss Bartlett made it do,
Pinching along on next to nothing here
Till Sam got his diploma. Just a year
After he'd started working in a drug-store,

The man who rented the farm got sick and died.

And there was poor Miss Bartlett with no money,

Not a single dollar bill that she could count on,

And owning acres and acres of useless land!

If dirt was only dollars now—but it isn't.

Land-poor she was, and a very bad case of it.

Of course she meant to let the farm again,
But no one wanted it, and her wood land
Was nothing but a six years' growth of saplings.

One afternoon Miss Bartlett sent me word
She wanted to see me. So I went right down

And had a talk with her. She told me everything

And asked me whether I could sell her land.

I didn't think I could, and said so frankly.

"Martin," says she, "I'll give you just six months,

If it ain't sold then, I know what I will do."

Now she might have meant she'd join Sam in the city,

Or take in washing, or go out for a house-keeper.

But she didn't mean any of those things,
She meant she'd kill herself. I don't know how

I got that, but I did. She might sell land,
The same as you might have your teeth pulled out,

But she couldn't leave that house. It seemed to me

As though she and the clock were wound together

And the house was the shell of both. The clock was ticking

In the silence that followed after she had spoken.

It ticked so loud I heard it in the parlour
Where we were sitting. It seemed as though her heart

Was ticking with it somehow, or that what

I listened to was not the clock at all
But her heart beating, pounding on the silence

To break it down. 'Twas fearfully uncanny,

And when I left her and went into the entry

There were those everlasting ships rocking and rocking,

And telling me something plainly all the time.

I couldn't pass them, and I got the notion

That they were shouting at me I could sell

The old land if I dared—just if I dared.

I hauled my feet away at last, and when I got outside I called myself some names

I wouldn't like another man to call me.

I thought I knew the clock was only fancy,

But I couldn't shake the idea of Miss Bartlett.

I knew I'd got that right, it was suicide
She had in mind. You bet I didn't leave

A stone unturned about selling that land.
I advertised it out of my own pocket.

Five months went by and I was almost crazy,

And then one morning I landed a customer.

He was rich as mud and mad as a March hare,

He wanted rural solitude, he said.
I told him he would find it at the farm

And he agreed he should. But, mad as he was,

I couldn't plant on him a single acre
Of that poor spindly, second-growth wood land.

What ever had been the farm he wanted badly,

But he wouldn't touch a yard of anything else.

I didn't blame him, the wood lots were a sight,

And 'twas luck you couldn't see them from the farmhouse.

For Miss Jerusha couldn't touch the farm trees

They being rented at the time, you remember,
 I tell you, Sir, I simply soaked that fellow,
 I made him pay twice what the farm was worth.
 And he stood for it, he liked the place so much.
 Well, that was that, and he had signed the deed
 A good two weeks before the month was up.
 It was a Saturday I took it over
 To get Miss Bartlett's signature. I can't forget
 How quiet and genteel the old house looked,
 With the lilacs by the door all in full bloom
 And the window-beds with their red-and-yellow tulips
 The way they'd always been. When I was a boy
 I never could pass that yard without looking in
 To see Miss Bartlett's flowers and sniff the scent of them.
 I used to smell it for hours afterwards.
 I felt as though I'd gained a lot of time
 That day and I didn't hurry to ring the bell.
 But when I did, and Miss Bartlett opened the door,
 The entry seemed as black as pitch to me
 Coming in from the sunlight, and the tick
 Of that infernal clock seemed to break the air
 The same as you break water skipping pebbles,
 I could scarcely hear Miss Bartlett greeting me,
 And when I looked at her I half expected
 To see the ships rocking upon her forehead.
 I got myself together in a minute
 And gave her the papers and showed her where to sign them.
 It took an age, I thought, and then I found
 That I was breathing in time to the ticking clock
 And counting—counting. I'd got to eighteen hundred
 Before she finished. Then I tried to say

Something appropriate, but nothing came.
 Miss Bartlett was like an image run inside
 By clockwork. Her face was wax—wax-white,
 And wax-still too, she thanked me like a doll
 Who speaks because you press it.
 I'd saved her life, perhaps, and yet I seemed
 To be pressing it out at the very instant.
 At any rate, there was nothing more to do
 And I got up. Miss Bartlett got up with me
 And walked to the door, and for some sudden reason
 Turned round and went directly to the clock.
 She had the papers still, and she held them up
 Before the clock-face with a curious gesture,
 Defiance it might have been, or supplication.
 It had a nasty look to me, the way
 She braced herself and cringed at the same time,
 Like I was watching some beastly ceremony,
 With torture in it and things one wouldn't think of.
 I might be seeing a heathen devotee
 Making oblation to a heathen god,
 A wood and metal thing without a soul
 But furious with abominable intention.
 Ten breaths I counted before the clock fell over.
 It started to strike, then with a hideous screech
 Of grating wheels and rapping bells, it tottered,
 Poised on its edge and suddenly came down
 And crashed Miss Bartlett with it to the floor.
 I got it off her somehow, she was breathing
 And muttering something. When I stooped to hear,
 She whispered, "Go and put the clock up, Martin.
 Put it up before you touch me." And I did.

And you would have done the same, Sir.

All she wanted
Was to see that clock in place before she died.

She saw it so, but when I went to lift her
I did not lift Miss Bartlett, but a corpse
With hands and feet already growing cold.

But nothing ailed the clock. I looked at it,

Its ships were rocking, cool as cucumbers,
Over and back, over and back. I carried
Miss Bartlett into the parlour and laid her down

On the sofa, and I could hardly pass the clock

For loathing, and a sort of fear, I guess.
I passed it twice, and it was ticking softly
And purring too, it might have been a cat,

When I went out to call the doctor.
They tell me

It was the wires jarring, but I know better.
Well, now you know the story, you can choose

Whether you want the clock or not. I thought so.

You'll never make me think it didn't kill her,

If there are homicidal clocks or no.
It may be foolishness, but I believe it,
Believe that clock has got a sort of mania.
If it were mine, I'd smash the case to pieces

And bury the works out under those rank saplings,

But Sam will have a word to say to that.
And now, Sir, we'll be starting for the train.

THE LANDLADY OF THE WHINTON INN TELLS A STORY

Yes, indeed, Sir,

'Tis pretty up here this time o' year,
With th' sumachs an' th' maples fer red,
An' th' birches an' th' oaks fer yaller,
Sometimes you'd think th' sun was shinin'
When 'tain't nothin' but leaves.
Ef you was to go up Tollman's hill,
You'd see th' country layin' out in front o' yer

Jest like a big flower garden.

I don't wonder city folks is so partial to th' mountains in th' Fall.

But they don't all care enough fer it

To come a-ridin' shanks's mare
The way you're doin'.

What was it you wanted I should tell yer?

Oh, yes, 'bout th' brick house over on th' Danbridge road.

I know well th' one you mean.

Sort o' tumble down, ain't it?

Run to seed?

That's th' one.

Th' old Steele farm, we call it.

It's in a dretful state.

Th' last folks had it was a pack o' Finns,

An' I never see such a shiftless set as they be.

Don't seem to have no idea o' nothin'.

But th' way they can grub a livin' outer stones

Do beat all.

Ther's a whole lot on 'em settled around here.

But I guess they wouldn't ha' got ahold o' th' Steele place

Only fer it havin' a kind o' bad name.

Sort o' got set in a streak o' cross luck, somehow.

You hitch your chair up clost t' th' fire,
And I'll tell yer 'bout it.

It's a funny story;

An' it ain't so funny neither,

Come to think of it.

I remember Tim'thy Adams well

When I was a girl.

He was inncerent an' feeble enough by then.

My father's told me th' story often,

But it all happened long 'fore my day.

It must ha' been nigh on to eighty year ago.

Ther' was two brothers livin' over to Danbridge at that time,

Name of Steele.

George an' Clif Steele.

Between 'em, they owned that farm you seen,

An' a hardware store to Main Street.

My father used ter say

Nobody hereabouts thought they could cut a rakeful o' hay

Or split a log.

Unless they'd bought th' scythe, or th' saw, or th' sickle,

To Steele's.

Funny name for a hardware store, warn't it,

But them things do happen.
 Well, as I said,
 They owned th' store an' th' farm, 'tween
 'em,
 Old Steele left it that way. °
 But 'twas real onhandy,
 An' nat'rally, they kep' a-treadin' on
 each other's toes.
 So 'bout th' time I'm speakin' of,
 They made up their minds to do th'
 splittin' therselves,
 An' they'd fixed it up that George was
 to have th' store
 An' Clif was to take th' farm.
 Clif warn't more'n five an' twenty, then,
 An' he warn't married,
 An' he scen, well as another,
 That a farm without a wife's a mighty
 ticklish thing.
 So he told his brother
 He'd look around a bit,
 And when he found a likely woman,
 He'd marry her,
 An' settle right away.
 I guess he warn't quite square 'bout th'
 lookin' around,
 'Cause everyone knowed he'd be'n keep-
 in' comp'ny
 Fer some time.
 Mirandy Eccles, 'twas;
 And Father al'ays said she was a fine,
 sensible girl,
 And a credit to th' man that chose her.
 Clif used ter take her buggy-ridin'
 With a fast sorrel mare he had,
 Done two thirty or somethin'
 Over to th' County Fair.
 Clif was proud as punch of her, an' of
 th' girl too.
 Father said th' whole street 'ud set up to
 look
 When they two druv along it
 Like a streak o' lightnin'.
 Clif thought his courtin' was goin' ele-
 gant,
 An' I guess 'twas,
 When all of a suddint,
 He was drawed for jury duty.
 That put a stop to th' junketin's,
 An' Clif was like a bear with a sore head.
 'Twas a kind of a queer case.
 A man called Tim'thy Adams was bein'
 tried
 Fer 'saulting his employer an' stealin'
 four dimonds.

I don't rec'lect th' name o' th' man whose
 store 'twas,
 But he was a jeweler an' watch-maker,
 Th' only one ther' was to Danbridge.
 One mornin' they found him most beat
 to a jelly,
 An' bound an' gagged,
 An' four big dimonds was missin' outer
 th' stock.
 Ther' was a candle in th' store
 Guttered to nothin',
 An' Mrs.—— th' storekeeper's wife —
 Said when she last seed it,
 Jest as she was goin' to bed,
 It was good an' long,
 An' would ha' burned a couple o' hours,
 anyway.
 Tim'thy used to come mornin's an' open
 up th' store.
 He had a key,
 An' that was th' only other ther' was,
 So suspicion fastened on him, good an'
 tight.
 He said he hadn't be'n ther' at all
 Sence closin' time.
 That he'd be'n fer a walk up th' moun-
 tain.
 But he hadn't be'n gunnin',
 'Cause he didn't take no gun;
 An' he hadn't be'n fishin',
 'Cause he didn't take no pole;
 An' nobody b'lieved a man 'ud go walkin'
 up th' mountain
 Jest fer th' pleasure o' gittin' ther',
 So it looked bad fer Tim'thy.
 Clif set in that Court Room,
 An' twiddled his fingers,
 An' thought o' Mirandy,
 An' never heerd so much as a haystack
 o' th' evidence,
 An' when lockin'-up time come,
 He didn't know no more about th' case
 Than th' town pump.
 In them days,
 Juries was locked up fer fair.
 They didn't 'low 'em home nights,
 An' they sent their meals in,
 'Stead o' marchin' 'em out to a hotel.
 Clif had got awful sick o' bein' ther'.
 He'd cut his name on th' table in th'
 jury room
 Till 'twas all pickled over with it,
 (I've seed th' table, with th' name on,
 myself),
 An' th' night after th' ev'dence was in,

Ther' was a dance to th' Town Hall,
 An' Clif wanted like pisen to be ther'.
 He set in that jury room,
 Hackin' at th' table,
 Till he couldn't stand it another minit,
 Then he jumped outer th' winder,
 An' shinned down a big elm-tree was
 outside,
 An' went to th' party,
 An' th' first person he run acrost when
 he got inter th' room
 Was th' Judge!
 That was a awful fix fer Clif,
 But th' Judge had be'n young once,
 An' he jest turned his back, an' never
 seed a thing.
 Clif didn't waste no time.
 He went straight up to Mirandy an' asked
 her to marry him,
 An' she'd missed him so,
 She said "yes" right out,
 An' Clif went back, an' shinned up th'
 elm agin,
 An' ther' he was, spick an' span,
 When th' door was unlocked next
 mornin'
 But he hadn't voted on th' case,
 An' th' foreman jest whispered to him,
 would he agree,
 As they went inter Court.
 Clif was in such good sperrits,
 He'd ha' agreed to anythin',
 So he jest nodded,
 An' poor Tim'thy Adams was convicted
 o' 'sault an' batt'ray,
 With stealin',
 An' sent to State's Prison for twenty
 year.
 I told you 'twas a queer story,
 But it's a heap queerer than you've heerd
 yit.
 Clif married Mirandy,
 An' they went to live to th' farm.
 They was a well-matched pair,
 An' everythin' went as fine as roses in
 July,
 'Cept they didn't have no children.
 But after it had all be'n goin' on like
 that fer most fifteen year,
 Somethin' turned Clif's mind back to that
 old jury case.
 Bits o' things he'd heerd in th' Court
 Room
 Kep' a-risin' up in his mind.

They must ha' be'n ther' all th' time,
 But he'd never sensed 'em.
 An' now they up an' slapped him in th'
 face.
 Th' more he thought, th' more he felt
 That Tim'thy couldn't ha' done it.
 He was a bit of a dreamer himself,
 An' he knowed a man could go up a
 mountain,
 'Thout hankerin' to shoot or fish.
 He thought an' thought, Clif did,
 'Till he was so nervous an' jumpy,
 He was all of a twitch from head to foot.
 Then one day he druv over to Danbridge
 'To see Judge Proctor.
 Th' Judge was a old man, an' retired,
 But Clif thought it 'ud ease him some
 'To see him.
 He told th' Judge all about it,
 But th' Judge said 'twas past an' gone,
 An' he'd better lay some of his fields
 down to red rye,
 An' try replantin' his wood-lot.
 But Clif didn't buy no red rye seed that
 day;
 He went straight to th' lib'ry
 An' read a lot o' old newspapers.
 Then he ferreted out th' Court clerk,
 An' fussed an' fussed,
 Till he let him see th' records.
 He druv back an' forth to Danbridge fer
 weeks,
 Readin' all th' papers 'bout that trial.
 An' th' more he read 'em, th' more he
 knowed
 Tim'thy hadn't had no head nor hand
 to do with it.
 Clif was most beside himself with worry,
 An' no wonder,
 He felt he'd sent a feller critter to State's
 Prison
 Who didn't b'long ther' no more'n he
 did himself.
 He act'ally got to feelin' he was th' one
 b'longed,
 He'd committed a wicked crime,
 An' he'd got t' expiate it.
 I guess he was most mad;
 Father often said so.
 He was thin as a rail,
 An' he couldn't eat nor sleep.
 An' th' farm all went to smithereens
 'Cause he hadn't no time to work it,
 Fer readin' ev'dence.
 He didn't know much law,

An' it 'curred to him,
 That ef he got all th' jury that done th'
 convictin'
 To change their minds,
 That would stop th' sentence right where
 'twas,
 An' Tim'thy could walk out o' jail.
 So th' poor lunatic started to git ahold
 o' th' jury.
 'Twarn't no easy matter to do,
 Fer some was moved away, an' some was
 dead;
 But he wrote, an' he travelled,
 An' he run here an' ther' like a hen with-
 out its head,
 An', in th' end, he got all th' livin mem-
 bers o' that jury
 To sign papers reversin' their decision.
 Is that very remarkable, Sir?
 P'raps you're right.
 Anyhow, he done it.
 When he'd got all th' papers,
 He went back to Judge Proctor,
 An' asked him, would he please arrange
 things
 So Tim'thy'd be free.
 O' course, th' Judge told him 'twarn't no
 manner o' use.
 That all th' papers in th' world wouldn't
 git Tim'thy out,
 Unless ther' was new ev'dence,
 Which, don't you see, ther' warn't,
 Not a scrap.
 So Clif went home, all broke to bits,
 An' put his papers in th' chimbley cup-
 board,
 An' Mirandy had all she could do
 To git a little bacon an' coffee down him.
 It's alays th' women gits it in th' end,
 you know, Sir?

Well, bimeby it come time fer Tim'thy
 to be let out o' jail.
 He'd served his term, barrin' what was
 took off fer good conduct.
 Th' very day he stepped out o' prison,
 Standin' directly in front o' th' gate
 Wher' he couldn't miss him,
 Was Clif Steele.
 Tim'thy was took all aback
 An' made to git out o' th' way,
 But Clif up an' hitched his arm inter his
 An' marched him off, real brotherly.
 "Tim'thy Adams," says Clif,
 "I done yer a great wrong.

I know you never 'saulted nobody
 An' never took no dimonds,
 An' I come here to-day to make it up to
 yer best I can," he says.
 "Come to yer senses, have yer?" says
 Tim'thy.
 "Yes, I have," says Clif.
 "An' I'm goin' to take yer right along
 home with me."
 Mehbe Tim'thy wouldn't ha' gone,
 Only his sperrits was all squeezed to
 nothin'
 By bein' so long in jail.
 Anyhow, Clif wouldn't hear no.
 An' them two went home together
 Like a pair o' old shoes.
 Folks wondered, would Mirandy like
 it?
 All I c'n say is, ef she didn't, she darsn't
 say so.
 I guess she was some feared 'bout Clif's
 stayin' in his right mind.
 Whatever was th' reason, she acted
 pleased as pie.
 So th' three on 'em lived in th' brick
 house,
 An' after a little, nobody heeded 'em no
 more.
 But Clif was all played out;
 Th' worry'd done fer him,
 An' two year come th' next Winter
 He died o' pneumonia.

Tim'thy an' th' widder
 Stuck it out fer a bit as they was.
 But tongues got to waggin'
 An' they must ha' heerd 'em,
 Anyways, one fine day they up an' got
 married,
 An' that settled th' talk for keeps.
 Then th' good times seemed come fer
 Tim'thy an' Mirandy.
 They warn't young no more, but they
 was real well suited.
 Folks kind o' fergot 'bout th' jail,
 An' Mirandy took a new lease o' life.
 Why, th' kitchen winders was all jammed
 full o' flower-pots!
 You never seed sich rose-geraniums,
 Everybody wanted slips from 'em.
 I don't know jest how it come 'bout,
 But one way or 'tother, Tim'thy took to
 tinkerin' clocks agin.
 He had a wonderful knack at makin' 'em
 go.

Not th' batteredest old clock as ever was,
beat him.

He'd set ther' in that kitchen,
Snuffin' up th' smell o' them geraniums
An' foolin' with little wheels an' wires,
An' all of a suddint he'd have th' clock
as good as new.

Most everybody has a broken clock;
Well, they brought 'em all to Tim'thy.
Th' house was full on 'em.

Now comes th' queer part,
An' ther' ain't no explainin' it, no how.
Many's th' time I've heerd my Father tell
it,

But I never give over startin' when I
think of it.

One day, Tim'thy was overhaulin' a fine
wall clock,

Th' kind with big weights hangin' down
under it,

When he give a cry,
So loud Mirandy heerd it out in th' clo'es-
yard.

She come runnin' in
With her heart in her mouth,
An' ther' was Tim'thy,
Starin' as though he seed a ghost,
An' holdin' four big dimonds in his hand.
They was sparklin' like icicles on a South
winder,

All green, an' blue, an' red.
Father seed 'em,
An' he said they was so bright
You could most see to read by th' flashin'
they made.

"Wher'd you git them things, Tim'thy
Adams?" Mirandy hollered out.
She was struck all of a heap
An' couldn't scarcely fetch her breath fer
wonder.

"Out o' th' clock," says Tim'thy, quick,
as ef a bee stung him.

"Who put 'em in?" asked Mirandy, kind
o' snappin' out th' words.

"I ain't no notion," says Tim'thy.
Now ther' was a fine fix, an' dimonds
agin!

Mirandy leaned up agin th' door-jamb to
save herself from fallin' —

"Whose clock is it?" says she.
'Twas old man Smart's clock, an' Tim'thy
telled her so.

Well, not to keep a-talkin' all day, they
sent fer old man Smart,
An' showed him th' dimonds.

But he said they warn't none o' his.
Tim'thy acted as ef he was afeared on 'em.
He'd put 'em on th' chimbley,
An' he wouldn't tech 'em agin, nohow.
Mirandy said she couldn't sleep with 'em
in th' house,

An' ther' was a fine hurrah-boys.
Th' neighbours got wind on it somehow,
An' they all come flockin' to ask fool
questions

An' git a sight o' th' dimonds.
'Tim'thy seemed kind o' crazed, all to
oucet.

He jest set ther', an' whispered: "In th'
clock! In th' clock!"

Nobody couldn't git another thing out
o' him.

Mirandy'd got to cryin' by then,
An' all th' women was soothin' her,
An' burnin' feathers under her nose.
'Twas th' awfulest mess ever was,
An' all along o' them pesky dimonds.
Somebody called in Lawyer Cary to Dan-
bridge,

An' he took charge o' th' dimonds,
An' they got th' house cleared somehow.
But nothin' ever warn't th' same after.
Mirandy went inter a sort o' decline,
An' died 'fore Thanksgiving'.

Tim'thy didn't die, but he didn't git well
neither.

He wouldn't tech a clock agin fer love
nor money.

If anyone said: "Clock," he'd commence
shiv'rin'

As though he had th' ague.
Then a nasty whisper got about,
You know how folks talk,
Well, 'twas said th' dimonds warn't really
in th' clock at all.

That Tim'thy had 'em all these years.
An' that he only pretended to find 'em
So's he could sell 'em at last.
Some said 'twas a trade 'twist him an'
Clif.

Clif had kep' 'em fer him while he was
to State's Prison.

I guess that was all foolishness,
But what made 'em think so
Was that old man Smart 'lowed he'd
bought th' clock

To a auction;
An' it turned out 'twas th' auction o'
that jewel'ry store
Where Tim'thy worked.

Th' man that owned it had sold out an'
gone away.
Lawyer Cary tried to trace him,
But 'twarn't a mite o' use.
He'd gone to Boston, an' they couldn't
find out another thing.
But ther' was th' dimonds, an' ther' was
poor old Tim'thy,
Half cracked with findin' 'em.
Property like that's a terrible nuisance.
Old man Smart wouldn't look at th'
things,
An' he told how he'd burnt th' clock,
Considerin' it a sort o' party.
They warn't Tim'thy's, that was sure,
An' Lawyer Cary said he wouldn't keep
'em after New Year's.
So th' Selectmen voted to sell 'em,
An' buy books for th' lib'ry with th'
money.
You c'n see 'em now, with a card in 'em:
"Bought with th' proceeds o' th' sale o'
four dimonds."
I must ha' be'n 'bout ten when Tim'thy
died,
I mind it well, 'cause Father told th'
story at supper
Th' day they buried him,
An' I ain't never fergot it.
Ther' was some trouble 'bout th' house
too.
George Steele had moved to Boston years
afore
An' his daughter (he didn't have no son)
had married,
An' they had a time findin' her under
her new name.
Anyhow, she didn't want th' farm, an'
'twas sold.
It's be'n goin' down hill ever sence.
Lor's Mercy! Ain't this world a queer
place!
Ther' was three lives all gone to smash
Over them dimonds,
An' nothin' to show fer it but a ram-
shackle house,
An' a passel o' books in th' lib'ry!
Well, that's th' story,
An' I must be seein' to your supper.
It's gittin' late.

"AND PITY 'TIS, 'TIS TRUE"

"Will they do anythin' to her, do you
think, Mirandy?"

"Do you mean prison?
No, I guess not.
That doctor from Boston said she wa'n't
no ways responsible."

"She's over to th' 'sylum, ain't she?"

"Yes, but th' doctor said she'd be right
as a trivet
In a month or two."

"I never seed th' child but once,
But now I mind, it 'peared awful big
fer five weeks, ter me."

"You may say so, 'Melia.
Ef you was a married woman
You'd ha' sensed right off
Somethin' was wrong.
Why 'twas all of a year an' more.
I guess that was th' reason she let you
see it.

You not bein' knowin' in such things.
I ast her ter le' me look at it a hunder'd
times
But she al'ays put me off
One way or another.
Bless you! She was as nervous as a witch
Fear o' bein' found out."

"Old man Drew wouldn't think nothin'
o' course."

"That's why she come here.
She was safe with only her Grandsir in
th' house.
He's in a terrible tew now, they say.
Eighty year old and al'ays respectable.
It do seem hard."

"How does 'Lisha take it?
He's one o' them husbands as sets a store
by their wives.
I remember his courtin',
He'd ha' pulled th' stars out o' th' sky
To lay a path so's Claribel could step
easy."

"He won't hear a word agin her now.
Says 'twas his fault fer bein' 'way when
'twas born.
Eben said he jest bust out cryin'
When they tell'd him th' baby wa'n't
his."

"Travels, don't he?"

"Yes, stoves.

Doin' elegant.

Only, o' course it takes him 'way most
o' th' time."

"She should ha' come home fer her layin'
in,
Then nothin' wouldn't ha' happened."

"I dunno.

'Tain't in nater to leave yer own home
When a baby's comin'."

"But she did leave her home, didn't she?
Went to a hospital or somethin'."

"Well, she had ter do that
Jest at th' last.

'Lisha was off West, you sec,
An' somebody had to 'tend her."

"Myl Ain't it a shame!
Poor little thing!
Ef she'd ha' sent fer me
I'd gone right down to Boston next
train."

"Anybody would.
But she was al'ays proud as Lucifer,
Was Claribel.
An' that baby comin' made her prouder'n
ever.
Why th' letters she writ 'bout it!
I declare they sounded like th' Bible.
She was all keyed up,
Seemed she wa'n't steppin' on no com-
mon earth,
An' she most sewed her eyes out
Makin' th' clo'es.
She didn't need nobody
But jest her thoughts.
She'd kep' that baby on her mind so long
It went all to shivers when ther' wa'n't
none."

"The' Almighty's ways do be past under-
standin'.
Why couldn't her baby ha' lived, I
wonder?
Most on 'em does."

"Seems she slipped on th' ice or some-
thin'.

Anyway th' baby was born dead.

They do say she took on 'bout it some-
thin' awful,

An' she wouldn't let nobody write to
'Lisha.

That doctor said they oughtn't never to
ha' let her out o' th' hospital alone.

But they did,

An' she was walkin' home

When she seed a baby-carriage settin'
outside a drug-store

With th' baby in it.

Th' mother'd gone inside fer a minit,

An' 'fore she kuowed what she was doin'

She had th' baby in her arms an' was
cuddlin' it.

She's a born mother, is Claribel,

An' her milk wa'n't dry,

An' I guess she jest couldn't put it down.

It's wicked to think o' what she must ha'
suffered

To do such a thing;

But she took that baby off home with
her,

An' she 'lowed to 'Lisha 'twas her own

She'd brought from th' hospital.

'Lisha was new to babies,

An' he didn't think nothin' 'bout its
size."

"I wonder why she come up here?"

"To git farther away, I guess.

'Twas all right an' proper

To bring th' baby home to visit with her
Grandsir fer a spell,

An' she never figured as they could trace
her up here.

When anybody wanted to see th' baby
She'd say she didn't want it should be
waked up.

It might ha' gone on till th' Day o' Judg-
ment

Ef th' Sheriff hadn't been a fam'ly man."

"You don't say!"

"Yes. You see th' other mother was
right down sick with fussin',

Nat'rally.

An' she an' her husband got th' perlice
on it.

An' they sent all over th' state,

An' to New York.

I guess they spent a mint o' money

Ef you was to count it.
 Sheriff, he read th' papers,
 An' one day he seed Claribel
 In th' village
 Wheelin' th' baby.
 It looked awful large ter him,
 An' he stopped an' ast a heap o' ques-
 tions.
 Claribel was at her wits' ends,
 An' bimeby she muddled herself 'bout
 somethin',
 An' he took her right into Cole's store
 An' had a good look at th' baby.
 That settled it.
 They do say that Claribel most killed th'
 Sheriff
 With a pitchfork was standin' ther'
 'Fore they got th' baby from her.
 I dunno's I blame her
 She's got mother in her blood."

"Blame her! Mirandy, you'd do th' same.
 So blame I ef th' Lord had seed fit ter
 gi' me a child."

"Ther's th' other woman, 'Melia."

"Yes, that's so.
 My! But th' ways of th' Almighty do
 beat all,
 An' I alays says so.
 Why, it's only a week ago I says to
 Parson Davis,
 'Parson,' says I, 'ther' ain't no manner
 o' use
 You expounding Scripture th' way you
 do,
 Day in an' day out.
 We'll never understan', I says,
 'Not till Gabriel's trump starts us all
 puttin' on our bunnits fer th' Resur-
 rection.'
 Mirandy, d'you s'pose Claribal'd care fer
 one o' my spice cakes,
 She used to be real partial to 'em?
 Jason could drive over to th' 'sylum with
 one most any day,
 Now th' apples is picked."

"So do. so do, 'Melia.
 An' I'll jest slip some o' them new jars
 o' quince conserve into a basket
 An' send 'em along too.
 I got a plenty."

THE HOUSE WITH THE MARBLE STEPS

He built the house to show his neigh-
 bours
 That decent thrift could lead to this,
 A giddy reason for his labours,
 A bright brick apotheosis.

He was not one to be bulldozed
 By sentiment, and he had planned
 Past whispered sneers when he fore-
 closed
 The mortgage on this very land.

He'd forced his way with prudent greed
 While they at best remained the same.
 He gauged the folly of a creed
 Which keeps a lame purse always lame.

Well, here it was, and in the road
 He stood and tallied beam and rafter.
 The cost would be a heavy load
 He'd tell you, twisting into laughter.

The window-edges were of stone,
 A soapy limestone smooth and fair.
 The floors were all hard wood and none
 Tailed off to pine beneath a stair.

If he were old and quite infirm,
 His house was very fresh and young,
 And envy is a winding worm —
 These thoughts were pepper to his
 tongue.

And so he watched it grow and grow,
 And jotted down the things he heard,
 Scheming to balance by the blow
 His house should deal as final word.

To crown the whole and go beyond
 Whatever yet had been attempted
 In his small town, he signed a bond
 Which would most certainly have emp-
 tied

The pockets of quite half his friends.
 Even to him it was a point,
 But when a man aims at such ends
 He must keep stiff in every joint.

He bought a quarry's good half year
 Of first-class, fine-grained marble output,

He paid a mason very near
As much again to have it cut.

The sharp white polished steps were
grand
Descending from the stucco porch.
They glittered like a marching band,
They mounted upward like a torch.

But he had taken to his bed
Before the last was set in place,
And one week later he was dead
With a slow smile upon his face.

The marble flashed beneath the fall
Of undertakers' feet who carried
His coffin to the funeral
Within the house. And there he tarried

For fifteen minutes more or less,
And "dust to dust" they read above him.
Now who had gained in bitterness —
For not one soul was there to love him?

They gaped upon the shining floors,
Their eyes scanned ceiling heights and
blocked them.

When all was done, they shut the doors
And shrugged their shoulders as they
locked them.

The house is charming now with weeds
Spring all about, the steps are mellow
With little grass and flower-seeds
Drifting across their sun-stained yellow.

Empty it stands and so has stood
More years than the town clerk can tell.
No legend has it he was good,
No tale reports that he did well.

They've tried to sell it, off and on,
But not a person wants to buy,
Though visitors who've come and gone
Remember it against the sky
In shrewd and sweet proportions glowing
Above a flight of marble steps where grass
is growing.

BALLADS FOR SALE

BALLADS FOR SALE

*Fresh, New Ballads, with the Ink Scarce
Dried upon Them*

*Have a ballad, good people
A sheet of song-words just pulled from
the press.*

*A new song all a-flutter in the wind.
Did you hear the drums and fife,
And the boys and girls calling down the
side streets?*

*Throw up your windows,
You, who live in the Square,
For I am passing by your doors
With sheets and sheets of songs,
To tickle your tears and your laughter
And set your feet a-jigging.*

*Will you have a penny posy of daisies and
dandelions,*

*and true love under a hedge?
For another penny, I can give you
roses,*

*Fountains, fish-ponds,
and a dim old palace streaked with
moonlight.*

*If the sea is your choice,
You must give me silver.*

*The sea is a hard thing to get into a
song.*

Martial ballads bring silver too.

*They are a bit out of style,
But I have two or three,
with guns popping like the Fourth of
July,*

*Printed in red ink,
with a skull and cross-bones at the
corners.*

*Then there is a merry song of a moor and
and a cocoanut,
and a clown who went to Heaven in a
fire-balloon.*

*Ha! Ha! You will hold your sides,
and all for a bit of white silver.*

*But it is yellow gold I must have for love
songs,*

*A drop of blood for a drop of gold,
and fourteen lines is a guinea.*

*See the wind flutter my songs,
They almost sing themselves out here in
the sunshine.*

*Step up, good people,
And buy a fine ballad crisp from the
press,
with the ink scarce dried upon it.*

TO A GENTLEMAN WHO
WANTED TO SEE THE FIRST
DRAFTS OF MY POEMS IN THE
INTERESTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
RESEARCH INTO THE WORKINGS
OF THE CREATIVE MIND

So you want to see my papers, look what
I have written down

"Twixt an ecstasy and heartbreak, con
them over with a frown.

You would watch my thought's green
sprouting ere a single blossom's blown.

Would you, friend? And what should I
be doing, have you thought of that?

Is it pleasant, think you, being gazed
upon from feet to hat,
Microscopically viewed by eyes com-
missioned just for that?

Don't assure me that your interest does
not lie with me at all.

I'm a poet to be dissected for the good
of science. Call

It by any name, I feel like some old root
where fungi sprawl.

Think you, I could make you see it, all
the little diverse strands
Locked in one short poem? By no means
do I find your prying hands
Pleasure bearing and delightful straying
round my lotus lands.

Not a word but joins itself with some
adventure I alone
Could attach consideration to. You'd
wrench me flesh from bone,
Find the heart and count itsappings. At
your touch, 'twould turn to stone.

What is I, and what that other? That's
your quest. I'll have you know
Telling it would break it from me, it
would melt like travelled snow.
I will be no weary pathway for another's
feet to go.

Seize the butterfly and wing it, thus you
learn of butterflies.
But you do not ask permission of the
creature, which is wise.
If I did consent, to please you, I should
tell you packs of lies.

To one only will I tell it, do I tell it all
day long.
Only one can see the patches I work
into quilts of song.
Crazy quilts, I'm sure you'd deem them,
quite unworthy of your prong.

One must go half-way with poets, feel the
thing you're out to find,
Wonder even while you name it, keep it
somehow still enshrined,
Still encased within its leafage like an
arbour honey-vined.

Lacking just this touch and tremour, how
can I but shrink and clutch
What I have to closer keeping. Little
limping phantoms, such
Are my poems before I've taught them
how to walk without a crutch.

You mean well, I do not doubt it, but
you're blind as any mule.
Would you question a mad lover, set his
love-making to rule?
With your pulse upon his finger, watch
him play the sighing fool?

Would he win the lady, tell me, with
you by? Your calculations
Might frustrate a future teeming with
immeasurable equations.
Which will prove the most important,
your research or his relations?

Take my answer then, for, flatly, I will
not be vivisected.
Life is more to me than learning. If you
clumsily deflected
My contact with what I know not, could
it surely be connected?

Scarcely could you, knowing nothing,
swear to me it would be so.
Therefore unequivocally, brazenly, I tell
you "No!"
To the fame of an avowal, I prefer my
domino.

Still I have a word, one moment, stop,
before you leave this room.
Though I shudder thinking of you wan-
d'ring through my beds of bloom,
You may come with spade and shovel
when I'm safely in the tomb.

ON LOOKING AT A COPY OF
ALICE MEYNELL'S POEMS, GIVEN
ME, YEARS AGO, BY A FRIEND

Upon this greying page you wrote
A whispered greeting, long ago.
Faint pencil-marks run to and fro
Scoring the lines I loved to quote.

A sea-shore of white, shoaling sand,
Blue creeks zigzagging through marsh-
grasses,
Sand pipers, and a wind which passes
Cloudily silent up the land.

Upon the high edge of the sea
A great four-master sleeps; three hours
Her bowsprit has not cleared those
flowers.
I read and look alternately.

It all comes back again, but dim
As pictures on a winking wall
Hidden save when the dark clouds fall
Or crack to show the moon's bright rim.

I well remember what I was,
And what I wanted. You, unwise
With sore unwisdom, had no eyes
For what was patently the cause.

So are we sport of others' blindness,
We who could see right well alone.

What were you made of—wood or
stone?
Yet I remember you with kindness.

You gave this book to me to ease
The smart in me you could not heal.
Your gift a mirror—woe or weal.
We sat beneath the apple-trees.

And I remember how they rang,
These words, like bronze cathedral bells
Down ancient lawns, or citadels
Thundering with gongs where choirs
sang.

Silent the sea, the earth, the sky,
And in my heart a silent weeping.
Who has not sown can know no reaping!
Bitter conclusion and no lie.

O heart that sorrows, heart that bleeds,
Heart that was never mine, your words
Were like the pecking Autumn birds
Stealing away my garnered seeds.

No future where there is no past!
O cherishing grief which laid me bare,
I wrapped you like a wintry air
About me. Poor enthusiast!

How strange that tumult, looking back.
The ink is pale, the letters fade.
The verses seem to be well made,
But I have lived the almanac.

And you are dead these drifted years,
How many I forget. And she
Who wrote the book, her tragedy
Long since dried up its scalding tears.

I read of her death yesterday,
Frail lady whom I never knew
And knew so well. Would I could strew
Her grave with pansies, blue and grey.

Would I could stand a little space
Under a blowing, brightening sky,
And watch the sad leaves fall and lie
Gently upon that lonely place.

So cried her heart, a feverish thing.
But clay is still, and clay is cold,
And I was young, and I am old,
And in December what birds sing!

Go, wistful book, go back again
Upon your shelf and gather dust.
I've seen the glitter through the rust
Of old, long years, I've known the pain.

I've recollected both of you,
But I shall recollect no more.
Between us I must shut the door.
The living have so much to do.

WHO HAS NOT, CANNOT HAVE

Lances slanted against a froward sky,
So do the days of my life appear before
me,

O verily Beloved,

Tempt me not, therefore, that I linger
With my long, pointed, red morocco
shoes

Scuffing the fallen vine-leaves
A-skip upon the lozenged marbles of
your floor.

I am not a man for chess and blue
cushions,

For sheep's-cyding across lute-strings
Of a dapper afternoon.

What were you among the cooks and
water-boys,

Camping on a wind-vexed plain at night-
fall

Amid the chattering stalks of last year's
grasses,

While I, in some lost distance, wage a war
Against the goblins of a mouldering gen-
eration?

Would you follow my tom banners where
they flicker

In and out of the cloven bellies of moun-
tains,

And the hail-stones gash like javelins,
And the sun dries up the roots of hair
Till my horse is naked as a woman

Bartered for an arid territory?
There are such, my lady,
And I have lands and lances to compel
them,

And owe them nothing but a five-petalled
kiss

Blooming between a brace of bloody
battles.

MID-ADVENTURE

Mist, vapour,
A little whiff of wind,
Noticed as nothing and as soon forgotten.

Such was my purpose.
 It would have held, too,
 No doubt of that,
 And you and I no other than we were.
 You would not have it so.
 Your call cloaked me in the seeming of
 reality,
 I entered, bidden, to your consciousness.
 And here I stand,
 Waiting, for so you will for me,
 Waiting.
 For what?
 Would you have me like a caryatid,
 Holding above your head some shelter-
 ing sky
 Of softened, tempered sunlight?
 Would you keep me as a gathered curio
 To say: "See, this I found, and kept for
 luck"?
 Or do you guess at possibilities,
 A warmth to draw from me when nights
 grow cold
 And gales whine bitterly in window
 cracks?
 For myself,
 I have lost recollection how I came.
 Returning shows a dim, uneasy way
 My feet refuse to follow.
 Yet suppose,
 Suppose the very custom of my long
 Vacant delaying just inside the door
 Blurs me to an impassive bibelot,
 A bit of furniture which, neither used
 Nor looked at, is most likely to be left
 Totally unregarded and ignored—
 My summons nothing,
 A caprice outworn—
 Standing forsaken in an empty room.
 How the wind howls!
 The fire is a red recumbent ash.
 The future, strange chameleon to the
 drift of time,
 Turns round on me a grinning paste-
 board face
 Dropped from a masker at a carnival.
 Hola! then. I'll be harlequin and dance
 In checkers of blood-red and black hearse
 plumes,
 Capering, dead drunk, upon a coffin lid.

CORRESPONDENCE

I wrote her a letter, she wrote me three,
 And the cadence was that of a leafing
 tree.

I wrote her four letters, she wrote me
 none,
 And the scuffled leaves lay dim and dun.

I broke my pen and wrote no more,
 Lacking the postman's knock at the door.

I scored that year with a mark of chalk:
 Second-hand compliments, windy talk,

Pleasant platitudes hung on a nail
 Useful to plump an uneven sale.

It will all come out in the wash, they say,
 And to-morrow but duplicates yesterday.

Even great Pharaoh takes no more room
 Than his huddled bones, though the
 spacious gloom

Containing them goes by his stately
 name.
 Dead leaves, dead kings, it is much the
 same.

Cocks crow daily on hills of dung,
 And no song is the first, nor the last,
 that's sung.

TO A LADY OF UNDENIABLE
BEAUTY AND PRACTISED CHARM

No peacock strutting on a balustrade
 Could air his feathers with a cooler grace,
 Assume a finer insolence of pace,
 Or make his sole advance a cavalcade
 Of sudden shifts of colour, slants of
 shade,
 Than you, the cold indifference of your
 face
 Sharpening the cunning lure of velvets,
 lace,
 Greens, blues, and golds, seduction on
 parade.
 You take the accolade of staring eyes
 As something due your elegance of pose,
 Feeding your vanity on pecks of dust,
 The weary iteration which supplies
 No zest. I see you as a cankered rose
 Its silver petals curled and cracked with
 rust.

AND SO, I THINK, DIOGENES

I told them to look at an apple-tree
 In a gust of blossom. They could not see.

I told them to notice people's faces
In quiet, unexpected places;

To catch the flying speech of eyes,
And stumble on some young surprise

Of joy as sharp as any dawn
Or afternoon across a lawn.

I told them to look at a thin, white
steeple
Soaring above a throng of people,

And listen to the people's cheers
When some one spoke. They had no ears.

Instead, they led me to a hill
Above a bay. The noon was still.

The water in the bay was cold;
The hanging air was slack with mould.

Gravestones were scattered through the
grass
So close there was no room to pass

For any save the narrow dead
Who need no paths on which to tread.

Each scraggy gravestone bore a name
And some brief episode of fame,

Some pious irony of grief,
Draped in the tatters of belief.

Misshapen flowers stood awry,
Too weak to face the staring sky.

The wind upon that barren hill
Was strangely sleek and strangely still.

A dreary shadow crept and crept
Across the gaunt graves where they slept

Who died so many years ago
And lay here softly, row on row,
With nowhere else at all to go.

They led me up and down the hill.
They said no word. The dusk was chill.

They left me at the edge of town;
They gazed at me and up and down.

Their eyes were ghastly white and cool
Like fishes in a frozen pool.

They left me where I stood, and bent
With feverish ague, turned and went

Back to the hill. "But they are dead,
They do but wander home," I said.

MESDAMES ATROPOS AND Clio
ENGAGE IN A GAME OF
SLAP-STICK

*"And better there for her than at that
inn he left her at to pine and watch the
Royal Sovereign come swing come smirk
in sailor blue and star and meet the rain."*
"THE AMAZING MARRIAGE"

Come swing, come smirk, in sailor blue
and star,
And I, poor lad, dead as Balaam's donkey,
Nothing left but a coat and star
And anyone's face clapped on top of 'em.
I was a round chuck-penny for fortune.

I was,
A fellow to straddle a quarter deck, step
up step down,
Guns, and runs, and the wind's eye wink-
ing.

So I stood it, swallowing the harbour
jauntings
Like so many puffs of cream,
And off to windward, clip at a black
squall

With a snap of my fingers.
Now I'm the laughing-stock of a cat's-
paw;

Come swing, come smirk, to every little
sniff of air,
Sailor blue and star, up and down,
With my hinges squealing like a cracked
serpent,

And every window behind mocking the
sight of me
And my silly star, gone no one knows
whither.

I was a man to stand the slash of hurri-
cane,
With a bowsprit of good metal spitting
mouthfuls of water and liking it.

Come swing, come smirk now,
With the black rain snivelling down my
front,

And the apple-faced sun wizening me to
a cranberry.

Such was my purpose.
 It would have held, too,
 No doubt of that,
 And you and I no other than we were.
 You would not have it so.
 Your call cloaked me in the seeming of
 reality,
 I entered, bidden, to your consciousness.
 And here I stand,
 Waiting, for so you will for me,
 Waiting.
 For what?
 Would you have me like a caryatid,
 Holding above your head some shelter-
 ing sky
 Of softened, tempered sunlight?
 Would you keep me as a gathered curio
 To say: "See, this I found, and kept for
 luck"?
 Or do you guess at possibilities,
 A warmth to draw from me when nights
 grow cold
 And gales whine bitterly in window
 cracks?
 For myself,
 I have lost recollection how I came.
 Returning shows a dim, uneasy way
 My feet refuse to follow.
 Yet suppose,
 Suppose the very custom of my long
 Vacant delaying just inside the door
 Blurs me to an impassive bibelot,
 A bit of furniture which, neither used
 Nor looked at, is most likely to be left
 'Totally unregarded and ignored —
 My summons nothing,
 A caprice outworn —
 Standing forsaken in an empty room.
 How the wind howls!
 The fire is a red recumbent ash.
 The future, strange chameleon to the
 drift of time,
 Turns round on me a grinning paste-
 board face
 Dropped from a masker at a carnival.
 Hola! then, I'll be harlequin and dance
 In checkers of blood-red and black hearse
 plumes,
 Capering, dead drunk, upon a coffin lid.

CORRESPONDENCE

I wrote her a letter, she wrote me three,
 And the cadence was that of a leafing
 tree.

I wrote her four letters, she wrote me
 none,
 And the scuffled leaves lay dim and dun.

I broke my pen and wrote no more,
 Lacking the postman's knock at the door.

I scored that year with a mark of chalk:
 Second-hand compliments, windy talk,

Pleasant platitudes hung on a nail
 Useful to plump an uneven sale.

It will all come out in the wash, they say,
 And to-morrow but duplicates yesterday.

Even great Pharaoh takes no more room
 Than his huddled bones, though the
 spacious gloom

Containing them goes by his stately
 name.

Dead leaves, dead kings, it is much the
 same.

Cocks crow daily on hills of dung,
 And no song is the first, nor the last,
 that's sung.

TO A LADY OF UNDENIABLE
BEAUTY AND PRACTISED CHARM

No peacock strutting on a balustrade
 Could air his feathers with a cooler grace,
 Assume a finer insolence of pace,
 Or make his sole advance a cavalcade
 Of sudden shifts of colour, slants of
 shade,

Than you, the cold indifference of your
 face

Sharpening the cunning lure of velvets,
 lace,

Greens, blues, and golds, seduction on
 parade.

You take the accolade of staring eyes
 As something due your elegance of pose,
 Feeding your vanity on pecks of dust,
 The weary iteration which supplies
 No zest. I see you as a cankered rose
 Its silver petals curled and cracked with
 rust.

AND SO, I THINK, DIOGENES

I told them to look at an apple-tree
 In a gust of blossom. They could not see.

I told them to notice people's faces
In quiet, unexpected places;

To catch the flying speech of eyes,
And stumble on some young surprise

Of joy as sharp as any dawn
Or afternoon across a lawn.

I told them to look at a thin, white
steeple
Soaring above a throng of people,

And listen to the people's cheers
When some one spoke. They had no ears.

Instead, they led me to a hill
Above a bay. The noon was still.

The water in the bay was cold;
The hanging air was slack with mould.

Gravestones were scattered through the
grass
So close there was no room to pass

For any save the narrow dead
Who need no paths on which to tread.

Each scraggy gravestone bore a name
And some brief episode of fame,

Some pious irony of grief,
Draped in the tatters of belief.

Misshapen flowers stood awry,
Too weak to face the staring sky.

The wind upon that barren hill
Was strangely sleek and strangely still.

A dreary shadow crept and crept
Across the gaunt graves where they slept

Who died so many years ago
And lay here softly, row on row,
With nowhere else at all to go.

They led me up and down the hill.
They said no word. The dusk was chill.

They left me at the edge of town;
They gazed at me and up and down.

Their eyes were ghastly white and cool
Like fishes in a frozen pool.

They left me where I stood, and bent
With feverish ague, turned and went

Back to the hill. "But they are dead,
They do but wander home," I said.

MESDAMES ATROPOS AND CLIO ENGAGE IN A GAME OF SLAP-STICK

*"And better there for her than at that
inn he left her at to pine and watch the
Royal Sovereign come swing come smirk
in sailor blue and star and meet the rain."*
"THE AMAZING MARRIAGE"

Come swing, come smirk, in sailor blue
and star,
And I, poor lad, dead as Balaam's donkey,
Nothing left but a coat and star
And anyone's face clapped on top of 'em.
I was a round chuck-penny for fortune.

I was,
A fellow to straddle a quarter deck, step
up step down,
Guns, and runs, and the wind's eye wink-
ing.

So I stood it, swallowing the harbour
jauntings
Like so many puffs of cream,
And off to windward, clip at a black
squall

With a snap of my fingers.
Now I'm the laughing-stock of a cat's-
paw;

Come swing, come smirk, to every little
sniff of air,
Sailor blue and star, up and down,
With my hinges squealing like a cracked
serpent,

And every window behind mocking the
sight of me
And my silly star, gone no one knows
whither.

I was a man to stand the slash of hurri-
cane,
With a bowsprit of good metal spitting
mouthfuls of water and liking it.

Come swing, come smirk now,
With the black rain snivelling down my
front,

And the apple-faced sun wizening me to
a cranberry.

Come swing, come smirk, all day long,
 Watching a boy jabbing a goose-quill into
 paper,
 By candle-light, when the moon fails,
 And Zip! they go out of window like so
 many fire-balloons,
 And some take the trees, and some foul
 the mud,
 And some give me a pinch in passing.
 Once I had a belly-ful of good sea-salt
 in me,
 And a cocked hat of brine to brisk me up,
 Me and my star;
 Now I eat that fellow's ripped-up papers,
 Whenever there's a breeze.
 And the sight of him, red-haired ninny,
 Sitting there with his head like a bon-
 fire,
 And his heart too, I daresay,
 Is a bitterer thing to spy at than the
 march of a China Seas typhoon.
 Come swing, come smirk, in sailor blue
 and star,
 To catch the rain, and catch his papers,
 Hot to blister the paint off me,
 And the white rain spoiling 'em,
 And the blue, morning rain sticking 'em
 together,
 And I in the drift creaking my rust at
 the flight they make.

Faugh! I say,
 This is a pretty heaven, this is!
 Dead and gone and should be let lie,
 Not swinging and smirking after other
 men's scribbings.
 Sailor blue and star,
 To tell the world here's an inn to stop at,
 And a young fellow blazing his eyes blind
 in a worm-hole
 After something he can't see.
 Pretty world he's made for me to swing
 in,
 Smirking at him with my star that's only
 paint
 When the bells toll of a Sunday,
 And a grinning churchyard underneath
 Rots the man I was.
 Can he cheat it when his time's come,
 Or will he, too, be strung up on a pair
 of whining hinges,
 Sailor blue and star, or something like it?
 Ding-dong bell on a sign-board,
 And the old goose gobbled full of papers
 Waddling down to the ditch.

That's a song for a Sunday morning,
 Come swing, come smirk, till your boards
 give way,
 And you go to grind shoe-leather,
 And the wind can't peck you from the
 dust.
 Grand world, come swing, come smirk,
 Baby Bunting world of painted nonsense,
 Up and down to a scrape of rusty bear-
 ings
 Like a man with a cold at the back of
 his nose;
 Holy-ghost world with a star on it like
 a cold pancake,
 And the devil's beer brewed of sick brains
 Which should be let lie and aren't,
 And go for the choking of geese
 Laid out stark in a green ditch
 Of a Sunday morning for the church-folk
 to see.

A COMMUNICATION

You deceived me handsomely
 With your inconsolable grief at parting.
 I really believed in your crocodile tears
 And suffered at the exhibition of your
 suffering;
 A little for myself also at the breaking of
 an old tie,
 A habit grown as comfortably pleasant
 As the wearing of a friendly dressing-
 gown.
 For we had passed the stage of exhilara-
 tion
 And reached the solace of a quiet domes-
 ticity.
 I was prepared to linger over it in retro-
 spect,
 Not too unhappily, for had we not agreed
 a thousand times
 That this sundering was merely geograph-
 ical.
 And now a month has passed and not a
 word have I had from you,
 Not so much as a scrawl to say you could
 not write!
 Fate lays innumerable springes for per-
 sons of imagination.
 Because I wished to believe,
 I saw in your Byronic gesture of woe,
 Not what it purported to be, certainly,
 But something not too different.
 You cast a larger shadow than yourself,
 that I realized.

But even I, who should have known
 better,
 Believed it was your shadow
 I crave your pardon for my blunder
 The mask was well assumed,
 I should have been critical enough to
 understand it was an artistic produc-
 tion
 I congratulate you on the verisimilitude
 of it,
 But I shall not be fooled again, be sure
 of that
 In future I shall see you as you are
 A plaster figure of a man that's grown a
 little dusty
 We all have knickknacks round which
 once meant something
 It is rather a wrench to take them from
 their niches,
 But life goes on, imperious, and bric a
 brac accumulates
 Still, because I cherished you once, I will
 not throw you away just yet
 I will put you on an upper shelf in the
 pantry of my mind,
 Among old flower vases I no longer use,
 being of a bygone fashion
 It may interest you to know that the
 place you occupied
 Looks a little strange to me without you,
 But that, of course, will pass

THE IMMORTALS

I have read you, and read you, my
 Betters,
 Piling high on the clear brown shelves,
 Mountain high, your very selves
 Disguised in a garb of letters

I have poked and pried beyond,
 Seeking past words for how you did it,
 While my mind was one tormented
 fidget
 Like a stone struck, shallow pond

I have unravelled your patterns out,
 And matched them piece by piece as
 they were,
 Till your hearts flashed again from the
 eistwihle blur
 Did I know then the rule from the rout?

Do I know how a flower comes —
 A spurt of blue or a shoot of rose?

Plant a seed and watch while it grows
 Chrysanthemums — geraniums —
 Let the scientists crack their craniums!

I know what paper is
 And I've handled pencils, and pens and
 ink
 Does grammar teach us the way men
 think?
 Can you narrow a man to a verb is?

Build him from his parts if you can
 Shade him to colour and cut him to
 shape
 Docket his method, something will
 escape,
 And, presto! Where is the man?

Two and two make four
 If your two and two will amalgamate
 But who knows the way to add moon
 shine to paint
 And there we touch the core

I read you as I look at the sky,
 Gratefully wondering at its fresh flowing
 blue
 If I'm not, why I'm not so why this
 to do —
 Must I disqualify?

Well, I won't, my Masters so reckon
 On the valiant rivalry of a flea
 I should be to you if I never said 'We'
 You great gods, why do you beckon?

Clearly the fault is yours
 Flaunting a challenge I can't resist
 I declare my back has a permanent twist,
 And my boot straps are counted by scores

Out of your anguish we see
 Out of your mighty rejoicing we are
 Your burning has scared us with a bleed-
 ing scar,
 We strive in irony

You most Serene and Dead
 In your bright gardens! Our Gethsemane
 Is planted with your immortality
 We walk with feet of lead

With leaden feet we move
 And still with heads flung up and bared
 Fools, in that seem, yet we dared
 To follow you and prove

Come swing, come smirk, all day long,
 Watching a boy jabbing a goose-quill into
 paper,
 By candle-light, when the moon fails,
 And Zip! they go out of window like so
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 And some take the trees, and some foul
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While my mind was one tormented
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I have ravelled your patterns out,
And matched them piece by piece as
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Till your hearts flashed again from the
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Did I know then the rule from the rout?

Do I know how a flower comes —
A spur of blue or a shoot of rose?

Plant a seed and watch while it grows
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In your bright gardens! Our Gethsemane
Is planted with your immortality
We walk with feet of lead

With leaden feet we move,
And still with heads flung up and bired
Fools, in that seem yet we dired
To follow you and prove

Prove whether stars or ashes.
That's the touchstone, is it not?
Graven tablets or dry-rot.
Well, the mist has sunny flashes.

APOTHEOSIS

The mountains were both far and high,
Their jagged peaks along the sky
Broke it like splintered porphyry.

I stood beneath a cherry-tree
Whose thick leaves fluttered ceaselessly,
And there were cherry clusters—three.

Prone at my feet was one who slept;
At my right hand, a maid who wept;
And at my left, a youth who kept

Vigil before a naked sword
Which gleamed and sparkled on the
sward
As though it were a holy word.

An eery moonlight lit the place,
Just bright enough to show each face
And each lithe body's proper grace.

The weeping maiden raised her head:
"I die for want of food," she said,
And in her famished gaze I read

The wasting of her life in tears.
Her face was shattered as though years
Had nicked it with an iron shears.

"Peace, Mournful Lady," I replied,
"Within these leaves dark cherries hide."
I raised my hand, but in a stride,

Catching his sword up, so he came,
The youth. His helmet burst to flame,
And on it shone a fearful name.

The maiden moaned and sank beneath
The tree's foot, like a fallen wreath
Of myrtle-buds, stripped of their sheath.

Once more we were as we had been:
One wept, one slept, one watched his
keen
Sword lying in the grasses green.

Then she who slumbered stirred and
woke,
And throwing back her ample cloak
She lifted heavy eyes and spoke:

"I faint for hunger," whispered she,
"And though above me I can see
Cherries, I am spent utterly.

Reach me the fruit for kindness, so
My blood may once more course and flow
As it was used, oh, long ago."

The words were faint as is the jar
Of air behind a falling star
Felt in a forest where ghosts are.

"Be still," I answered, "if I fail
To succour you, no burning mail
Will be the force to which I quail."

Brave words to whip my spirit on.
Under the leaves the cherries shone.
A moment and I should have done.

But, as the thought came, so did he,
And stood beside the cherry-tree,
And struck his sword upon her knee.

Even while she fell, he went his way,
And laid his sword as erst it lay,
And mournfully awaited day.

Then, drearily, above the rim
Of mountains, rose a sun so dim
I only knew day watching him.

For, as the morning slowly grew,
He took another ghastly hue,
And what was pale had turned to blue.

His corselet was corroded rust,
Between his greaves a briar thrust
Its long head up, his eyes were dust.

His sword still lay upon the ground,
But all at once it moved and wound
Among the grass-blades to a mound

Of heaped-up earth, and entered in,
Inch above inch, for what had been
A sword was now become a thin

Long line of ants, who crawled and went
With the strange, multiple consent
Of myriads working one intent.

Sick and distraught, I turned to where
The weeping maid had been, and there
Was nothing but a gusty air

Which blew upon a ruined town,
Tall girders, stripped of stone, looked
down
On crumbled streets where weeds had
grown.

A doorway opened a gaunt eye
Upon the rats which scurried by.
A roofless window watched the sky.

And all the frayed and brittle soil
Of that dead city seemed to boil
With insects laden down with spoil.

Again I turned and sought the spot
Where one had slumbered, and my hot
Eyes rested on a graveyard plot.

A devastating plague of sand
Had swept it, piled on either hand
Were broken headstones, and a band

Of plundering ants crept in and out
Among the graves and round about.
The very air smarted with drought.

The valley burned without a sun,
Gasping beneath a twilight, dun
And twitched with heat, through which
gnats spun.

And, sweeping it, my eyes could see
No semblance of a cherry-tree,
The plain was flat as plain could be.

But where that long night I had stood
Lay a sarcophagus of wood
Covered with ants as red as blood.

Then suddenly a frozen cry
Tingled along the brazen sky,
And he who uttered it was I.

Tangled in scorching sand I fled.
The mountains closed about my head.
The stifled air proclaimed me dead.

I woke — for I had slept, it seemed.
My head ached and I must have dreamed.
Above me, cherry blossoms gleamed

A slant of whiteness to a sky
So blue it glared bewilderingly.
I crushed an ant and wondered why.

BEHIND TIME

On days when the sky is grey, not blue,
My mind strays back for an age or two,
And amuses itself in a little place
I have made to provide a breathing space
Whenever our twentieth-century air
Heats to a temperature so rare
It stifles fancy, and our thundering cities,
Weighted down by cares and pities,
Load my soul with a heap of dust
Through which no least conceit may
thrust

A single stalk or a single bloom
In a free-flung way. Keats made a room
To house him on afternoons like this;
Poe followed him, and created a bliss
Of black and silver furniture;
And Samain, obedient to the lure
Of both these chambers, builded his
Like as a pea, a sort of *his*
To the others. But Browning broke new
ground

In Italy, and what he found
Was "a gash in a wind-grieved Apennine"
With a castle a-top. Now this of mine
Is no rock-perched castle, not even a pink
House of scaling stucco just at the brink
Of a blue Neapolitan bay. Browning's
love

Outsoars mine as he soars above
Whatever little there is in me,
I am more modest, as you will see.
My dream is a cottage, trim and neat
As paint can make it, the village street
Runs past, beyond a grove of trees,
But only my gable-ends show through
these

To any one walking up and down
The sleepy street of that sea-side town
Where even the fishermen merely fish
When someone's table's in need of a dish
Of oysters, or eels, or cod. My eaves
Peep archly over the bustling leaves
Of Virginia creeper, and down below
The wall-beds glitter with golden glow,
And asters, and black-eyed sun flowers.
And a strawberry-bush with its dun
flowers

That smell of allspice stands at each
end

Just where the lawn takes a sudden bend
And turns the corner. A foot or two
From the creaking piazza, a naval review
Of seventy-eights and ninety-fours

Whirls round on a wheel without a
pause:

Four-masted schooners luff and jibe,
Fill again with wind, and circumscribe
The limit of their revolution,
And in the centre, the "Constitution"
Points always at the very eye
Of whatever wind is blowing by.
Beyond the lawn, a little cliff
Drops to the shore, held firm and stiff
By rooted broom. The clucking lap
Of waves on shingle, the sudden flap
Of a fisherman's sail as he hoists it up,
A grumbling rowlock — you may sup
On a sunset silence such as this
Each afternoon. The clematis
Drops a petal on the old sea wall
As purple as the lights which crawl
And melt and flow across the bay.
Whipped green and silver with streaks of
grey

Differently mingled every day.

Along the tall horizon slips

A dim procession of sailing ships

So slowly that they scarcely change

Positions from morning till night. The
range

Of the telescope planted on the green
Brings illusions of sound where no sound
has been,

The bustle of shipboard suddenly grown
Near and clear through the glass half-
crown

Of the eye-piece, but take away your eye,
The ships are still as tapestry.

Here is a foot-path, let us go

And see the place where my flowers grow.
Sunken a foot or two below

The bowling-green, my garden lies,

Flanked by hemlocks of every size

Clipped into peacocks and unicorns,

And monstrous dragons for the scorns

Of noble St. Georges. A hedge of thorns
Protects the tiger-lilies set

In rigid rows. The mignonette

Smells sweet, I see a bunch of it

Plucked by a hand which wears a mit,

Just as I see the pansy faces

Peeking from kerchiefs of Mechlin laces,

And not the trace of rowelled spurs

In the monk's-hood bed where a late bee
stirs.

Here is a maid and a manikin
Of painted bisque, half-hidden in
An old laburnum's dropping shade.

The little man rests on his spade
And ogles the maiden's broad-brimmed
hat

Since he can see nothing of her but that.
Paul and Virginia, he and she,
Mincingly fashioned in pottery.

Now up three steps where the sunlight
sifts

Through a thick pleached alley, when
one lifts

The latch of the gate, the click as it
closes

Is like the snap of buds into roses.

See the little apples are taking shape

And colour above our heads, they gape

And gossip between the latticed leaves,

Look down at your feet where the sun-
light weaves

Quaint patterns of stems and fruit and
we

Walk round in them deliciously.

Now let us go through my open door

And tread the black-and-white-squared
floor

And hang our hats on the horns of a deer
I've put in the corner over here.

Four rooms as uneven as carpenter's rule

Ever dared to leave. The first is full

From floor to ceiling of maps and books;

Poetry mostly, by the looks.

Thick little duodecimos,

Slender cloth-covered octavos,

Musty, and fusty, and fingered all,

Make a faded rainbow of each wall.

Within them, faint as a scent of musk

Are words which glimmer through the
dusk

Of that vanished world which lies just
over

The hither side of each marbled cover.

The fireplace is low and wide

With a rusty crane against the side

And an oven behind, where I keep my
cherry

Brandy. Mahogany, pale as sherry,

My writing-table is; the locks

Are brass in the form of crested cocks.

Here are chairs of red and brown

Crumbling leather, pliant as down;

On the arms is manifest

The very spot where my elbows rest

When I balance my mighty folios

And read of men with timber-toes

Who discovered archipelagoes

Or rotted for weeks in a bear-skin tent

With moss for their sole nourishment
Beneath Auroran boreal
Nights for phantasmagorial
Possession of a goodish slice
Of that part of the earth which is nothing but ice.

Now cross the hall and I'll introduce
You to something else; a ship's caboose
Saved from the wreck of the Minnie B.
Gone on the sands in seventy-three.
Here is a lantern which used to scan
The foaming wake of an Indiaman;
'These chessmen were scrimshawed out of the teeth

Of a whale; that knife in its lacquer sheath
Was filched from the deck of a Chinese junk
A half-an-hour before she sunk

With her pirate crew; this necklace of shells
Was strung for the Indian Jezebels
Of Pitcairn Island, who smiled long years
Ago at the "Bounty" mutineers.

The floor of this room seems to careen
Beneath one's feet, and walls of green
Sea-water to dash against the slim
Matched boards of the sides. I hear the swim
Of a deck-wal sliding from scupper to scupper,
And down through the flanges of the upper
Air, faintly flying above the swell,
The everlasting cry: "All's well!"

Or "There she blows!" or "Breakers ahead!"
I wonder if anything's really dead.
Well, well, there's enough of that. In here
Is a totally different atmosphere.
A pretty shape, this room, the leather
Hangings keep out all notion of weather,
They are Spanish, embossed in gold and blue.

That little picture is a view
Of Venice by Guardi, the Piazzetta
In Carnival, a floweret, a
Shimmer, a perfume, an age in petto
Eighteenth century allegretto.
Considerably unlike it hangs
A Turner, where a mountain's fangs
Close over the plunge of a waterfall
With a slant of sunlight striking it all
To the doom of a planet's evenfall.

Jagged, haggard, splintered steep,
Swept with gold above the deep
Abysmal hollow curving under
The bow of the torrent, grim rotunda
Tawny lit and shocked with thunder.
Here's a picture of nothing but the tops
of trees,

Wind-blown, cloud overlooked. If you please

"Tis the life-like portrait of a breeze.
No more, no less, what Constable saw
On Hampstead Heath when a burk cat's paw

Flurried out of the West North West the prize

Of an Autumn morning. I see your eye,
Stray to the corner where stands my spinet.

Suppose we consider it a minute,
Salvator Rosa painted the case
Of satin-wood. Is it out of place
To put a drawing by William Blake
Just above? Does it seem to shake
A symmetry? Perhaps, but it's done.
Observe the rolling, crimson sun
Glitter along the huge outline
Of that weary form, relaxed, supine,
A man on the edge of a rocky world
Balanced above an ocean curled
And frozen. All Eternity
Shouts in that over-borne man for me.
Let us sit awhile and hark to the speech
Of a century beyond our reach,
Colossal, fastidious, witty, brave,
Importuning us from the grave.
Shift on your spindle-legged gold-white
chair,

You will not find the answer where
You seek it. Science cannot raise the flap
Between us and these, nor know what gap
Divides Reynolds's, Romney's, Gainsborough's
Population from men like us.

There seems the fragilest sort of partition
Between then and now. But what condition

Do we subscribe to a cruel decree
That what is, for us, is but what we see?
The world slinks daily, must we confine
Ourselves to a geographer's hue,
Choosing our friends by accident
Of almanac? What impudent
Design is this, which would control
Free intercourse of soul with soul,

Because, forsooth, an airy thing
Brushes us with its bat-like wing.
A thing we cannot see or touch!
Shall such a nothing dare a clutch
At us in passing? So I sit
Considering time and hating it,
Until I glance at that strange clock
Upon the mantel. With a shock,
I see the face is changed, the numbers
Are there no more, something else en-
cumbers

The dial, a half-moon something, writ
About the upper edge of it.
I notice that the iron hands
Point to this crescent, and each stands
Stock still; then I behold the words,
Contrived grotesquely of crossing swords,
And what I read in crimson ink
Is, "It is later than you think!"
I rise and take my latch-key down
And through the peaceful, sleeping town
I walk back to my century,
The dun, dumb years reserved for me
To wander in and call them mine
And be called theirs in every line
Historians may choose to write
Upon my night, my night, my night.

GOUACHE PICTURES OF ITALY PALAZZO CONTARINI

Beside the high window, but partly with-
drawn
And concealed by the fold of a gold-
lacquered screen,
This admirable day-bed discovers the
sheen
Of its hooped salmon satin and yellow-
ing lawn.

On spindle legs, thin as a spider's, it
stands.
The gilding has scaled to a faint silver
tone.
A lavender dust, as of hours outgrown,
Drifts past on a quaver of old sarabands.

Bewilderingly fragile, it baffles decay
With the porcelain pinks on the ornolu
spray
Twined about the Saxe clock. Hark! the
weary sweet chime

Of the hour it strikes. At precisely this
minute

The Duke would declare he was wasting
his time
And the lady half-languidly rise from her
spinet.

Poor flesh and blood lovers long dead,
the fine bloom
Of your coquetry crumbles and smiles in
this room.

THE LIME AVENUE

With a crunching of gravel and flapping
upon it
Of scarlet soutanes, down an alley of
limes,
Where the tree-boles, as evenly distanced
as rhymes,
Cut their long promenade into bars like
a sonnet,

Two cardinals whispering under the trees,
Discussing the doctor's last news of the
Pope,
And artfully hiding an indiscreet hope
With a long pinch of snuff and its con-
sequent sneeze.

Lowsy eyes, pendant jowls, immense
purple-sashed waist,
Soft labial words dripping out on the
taste
Of a greedy ambition. The other—
succinct,

Lips of wire, and face all one cold,
chiselled piece,
Pronouncing his bribe with each word
quite distinct:
"To your connoisseur's palate I offer my
niece."

Pope's arms in a moss-confused lozenge,
an ache
Of slow wind, and the whine of a
gardener's rake.

THE WATER STAIR

Under cypresses, ilexes, myrtles, within
Granite edges, or slipped over broad-
ended stairs,
Is a moving of water, and large tranquil
squares
Stain its umber and gold with a green
lily skin.

No splash, just a ripple which jars the
smooth air
Into damp undulations. Remote and
suspended
Winds pause in the trees, and the shad-
ows are blended
With gleams as of moonlight entangling
drowned hair.

Steps — steps — phantom footsteps.
They shuffle and blur
And crowd the wide stairs with an odd,
timid stir
Thinly teasing the sense where there's
nothing to hear.

Crimson heels, silver clocks, the shock of
them whines
With the shrillness of flutes in the thick
atmosphere.
Purple flutes fading silver and rose
through the pines.

Liquid lap of old water, and I am con-
fused
With the scent of crushed violets my feet
have bruised.

THE STABLE

Two rows of stiff poplars, wind-bitten
and grey,
Flank the high-cobbled courtyard in long,
serried lines;
And between them the old stable-clock
dimly shines
With its cracked yellow dial defying
decay.

It was here that six lumbering, thick-
barreled marcs
Were wont to be harnessed to my Lord's
glass coach
When he drove out to call on his neigh-
bours and broach
Some scheme of importance to landed
affairs.

Now the leaves of the poplars may settle
and fall
And drift where they will in the juts of
the wall,
While the grass has half-buried the sharp-
pointed stones.

A ripple of pigeons waves over the yard,
And a toothless old bitch, who is noth-
ing but bones,
Grows drowsily at them to prove she's
on guard.

With a wheeze, and a whirr, and a hor-
rible catch,
The clock strikes eighteen; it is two by
my watch.

FETE AT CASERTA

THE QUEEN OF NAPLES RECEIVES

But tickets, of course, at the door of
the theatre
Scrutinized by a Lord of the Court.
What a blaze
Of wax candles reflected in gilding, a
haze
Of cross-lights like a halo! Is this not
Caserta?

The pit is a ball-room, the stage a bright
stair
Of musicians in livery; the dazzle be-
comes
An effulgent wax sun where the great
kettle-drums
Crown the apex. Can eyesight endure
such a glare?

The Queen! Hist! The Queen! Though
she's wearing a mask,
No one can mistake her. She approaches
to ask
If the strangers liked France, if they'd
met the Dauphine?

At midnight exactly, proclaimed by six
flutes,
Enter soldiers with plates and a great
galantine
Of hot macaroni, with cream and iced
fruits.

But the Queen sups on two dishes only,
and these
Are prepared by her own special cooks —
Viennese.

SANTA SETTIMANA

On a carpeted bench, thirteen well-
chosen priests,
All tutored and drilled in an excellent
miming.

The Last Supper staged to the sonorous
chiming
Of the Pope's special choir in silks and
batistes.

His Holiness, bibbed with an apron of
lace,
Arises sodately from his great purple chair
And draws off thirteen socks leaving thir-
teen feet bare,
Washes each in a basin of gold, and
with grace

Presents thirteen bouquets, and a paper
of coins,
Returns to his carved purple chair, bows,
and joins
His well-mannered hands in a semblance
of prayer.

Thirteen silver plates laid on exquisite
lawn,
Thirteen eager priests' noses snuffing the
fare:
Herring salad, broccoli in oil. And each
pawn

Gulps the wine the Pope pours. While
behind the Pope's guards,
In a stiff inattention, plan their next
game of cards.

THE AMBASSADOR

Coat of purple stamped with velvet, satin
breeches to match
Of the same sober, elegant hue, white silk
stockings
Of a texture so fine that their silver-
thread clockings
Seem embroidered on nothing. A great
gold-sealed watch.

The slightly bull neck is concealed by
the fall
Of a cascade of point-lace imported from
Brussels,
And ruffles of lace at the sleeve-ends hide
muscles
Too thick for a man who would shine
at a ball.

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur aims at all
things, it seems:
Wit, duellist, banker, his lottery schemes
Are the whisper of Paris. He glitters to-
day

Sardinia's envoy to France, whose finesse
Has taught him the power there is in
display;
Note the painstaking fanfaronade of his
dress.

The coat was embroidered in Chinal His
air
Is a trifle bombastic as he walks up the
stair.

FROM NICE TO ONEGLIA

An astonishing view, she regards it with
eyes
All astare at its glitter and space. Where
the sea,
Creeping up to the cliffs, leaves a foot
or two free,
Runs the path she is following with such
gay surprise.

A lady, a Countess, whose long flowing
habit
Proclaims her as English by every known
rule,
Perched up on a deft little mouse-col-
oured mule
Stepping daintily, softly, as any jack-
rabbit.

What a heavenly journey, this coming by
land
From Nice to Oneglia, outriding her
train!
She is vastly amused — why, even the
sand . . .

The mule shies, she pulls him up sharply
and sees,
Just over the edge of her tightly held rein,
A skull, water-washed, grimly bright in
the breeze.

The guide, coming up, shrugs his shoul-
ders with shady
Indifference, "It's only the pirates, my
Lady."

VILLA CAPOUANA

In the grounds of the Villa Capouana
where now,
By municipal order, is a vast cemetery,

The noble and good rest in row after row,
But a single great grave, far more spacious
and airy,

Is allotted to those so unwise as to die
Or be killed out of spite in the late revolution.

Here they lie in a heap underneath the
blue sky,
A heap of white bones in a mixed distribution.

What excellent playthings! Giannina has
wound

A thigh-bone in bright purple rags.
"This," says she,
"Is Brighella." And Tito, having pulled
from the mound

A great hollow skull, gathers violets and
yew

To put round its head. "See, a King,
now he's crowned,
And the King asks Brighella to a monster
review."

So the children set arms, fingers, jaws,
in platoon,
And play soldiers and kings all the long
afternoon.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA CHIARA, NAPLES

The day has arrived when the marvellous
earth

Beneath Santa Chiara has leave to exhibit
The dead it preserves in the stature and
girth

They displayed when alive, which most
earth's prohibit.

Since even such dead cannot stand, they
are held

By a rope round the waist concealed by
their dress.

To be sure they loll oddly, as though they
rebelled

At this forced resurrection in its full
loathliness.

But the populace, come by the dozens
to see

Its neighbours and friends, comments in
high glee:

"Look at Niccolò Baldi, how rakish he
looks.

That's because Margherita hangs her
head right beside him.

She is teasing him still, though they're
nothing but spooks."

"She's a fright now, at least. I could
never abide him."

"Nor he you, I believe." They titter and
leer.

Too bad such a show comes but once a
year.

IN THE CAMPAGNA

With his wide crimson cloak and his
cardinal's hat,

Like an emphasized flower, amazing the
grass

Of the Autumn Campagna, he stands
with his fat

Fingers quick on the lock of his gun and
the glass

Which is tied to an owl on a perch glints
and glitters

Attracting the larks and the finches that
fly

In a dazzling confusion of wings and
sharp twitters.

The cloud of them hides several yards of
blue sky.

Behind him, two liveried grooms load
fresh guns

And watch larks and goldfinches fall in
dozens, quenched suns

Attesting his skill, for the Cardinal's
game

Is how many small song-birds he can take
as his booty

Without shooting the owl who is flus-
tered though tame.

A rare sportsman this Cardinal in his
moments off duty!

To-night at the Contessa's supper he'll
boast

That she owes to his prowess the larks
served on toast.

PORTRAITS, PLACES, AND
PEOPLE

TO ELEANORA DUSE

IN ANSWER TO A LETTER

"Regrets and memories these short
December days."
How the words cut and scar themselves
Across my heart!
Dear lady of the great compassion,
All tenderness cunshed in withes of
truth,
Experience harboured for its seeking
flame,
Clean burning flame of knowledge be-
yond thought,
Sword-blade of sheerest beauty,
As the sun sinks wanly,
Branch by branch,
Through the shaking, leafless trees,
How cruelly the twilight comes —
I watch it here,
At this long distance from you,
And rage at impotence
Which can give you no brighter present
Than the flicker of a small red candle
Lit by you long ago.
You wrong yourself dwelling upon the
past;
I have it from your lips:
"The past is dead. The future alone has
life."
The past is dead, save in the continuity
Of your most inaccessible loveliness.
Where touch is healing should be no
regret
At that which makes it so.
You walked, and walk, incarnate soul
Of human needs and meetings.
This sight of you is the clarity of courage;
Your movements, insistent, compelling,
muted trumpets in a still air;
Your voice, ah, dear, that voice, as April
rain
Dropping at evening on beds of unsprung
tulips.
Where has there ever been a flesh
So rightly framing such a spirit? Tell me.
You cannot.
Words are pebbles,
A gravel-path for you to tread and spurn.
Music is liker to encase your essence,
Yet you escape, for what you really are
Hangs to no swiftest flash of evocation,

But floats in rondure of its perfectness
Out of our sight as possible, impossible,
Peak of a human capability,
Infinite spirit with the lightest shadowing
Of merciful and finite flesh.
Has any one ever so held the cords of
life,

Of all our lives, as you?
You dare not say there has and gaze
truth in the eye.
Look back, then, if you must,
But see plain fact,
Yourself the soul's wine of a generation,
The whispered bourne of blessings to a
world.

TO ELEANORA DUSE

1923

If you believed my words,
O tragic, incommunicable lady,
Would they lure you for an instant
From your long, rapt contemplation
Of the sunset-tinted clouds
Lowering in grim and huddled splendour
Over the broken turrets of your ruined
sorrows?

Dead to the sting of anguish,
The misery that you ache no more
Is aching so preponderant and huge
You walk within it as an atmosphere
And breathe its bitterness like some
gaunt poison

Easing you into numbness
Even of its slow insidious advance.
Where grief has watched
Sits now the ghost of grief.
Where tenderness once held out arms to
gather

A universe's loneliness,
Reigns now a weariness of feeling,
A kindliness too spent to give itself,
To smile less calmly than a sculptured
saint

Enduring anthems in an incensed niche.
The small dried cones of my fardel of
years

Make a poor faggot to light before you.
And yet if you believed them wood not
wax

Might not the little raw flame of them
Warm you to a single throb of your lost
life?

I see you there before me,

Distant as the shattered past, the shapeless future,
 The sprig of your sowing withers in my hands,
 Your remoteness is too vast to cherish it.
 See, I please it where your somnambulist feet
 May tread upon it
 Crushing its fragrance to play round your dreams
 I could give much,
 Give back what you will not believe your own,
 Give laughter, tears.
 I am not poor in such,
 Richer than you are now, perhaps.
 You put me by
 Gently, as something in your path
 Which, scarcely seeing, yet you brush aside.
 You hurt less in the days of your revolt
 Than in this quietude of charity.
 The sight of you is piercing as a cry,
 Your loveliness betrays my eyes to tears,
 They smart in falling.
 I am no hero-worshipper,
 Yet for your sake I long to babble prayers
 And overdo myself in services.
 Is this not love, then?
 My I not write myself disciple, follower?
 Unworthy, doubtless, but authentic grain
 Sprung from your scattered seed?
 Yet you smile and say:
 "Of course, it is not true."
 If this be not truth,
 Then truth and I have never made a company.
 You want no service, no compassion, no refreshment.
 Tranquillity you think you have, or call it so,
 I call it poison dripped from traitorous urns.
 You pass me like a legend sprayed with flowers,
 The legend of my youth, and now henceforward
 Of my age.
 Pass, lady,
 To whom I can give nothing, nothing.
 Yet here again I say it,
 With the doggedness of custom grown inveterate:
 What you gave I give back again and shall,

Along the smooth years where you wander now,
 Perfectly heedless of your heedlessness.
 Truth is a brazen thing, and I,
 Banging against the brass of utter fact,
 Do make perhaps a horrid din
 To your peace-longing ears.
 So be it, I am silent,
 But still here, believed or not,
 A chance creation not at all desired,
 Yet so existing while our double names
 Shall carry any meaning to men's minds.

THE MADONNA OF CARTHAGENA

Where a chain of sandy beaches
 Cuts across an open sea,
 Blue as asters, pink as peaches
 Out beyond the farthest reaches
 For a distant eye to see,
 Every colour that one wishes
 May be witnessed hereabout
 From the sand-dunes to the ocean.
 If the tide is going out,
 There are sea-gulls in commotion
 Flying over where a fish is;
 In a pool as green as grass
 Crimson shatterings may pass
 Or a blackness blowing over
 Quench the colour like a cover;
 And the fronds of water-weeds,
 Thick as leather, wave and feather,
 Tossing stems blown out with beads
 As wave after wave recedes.
 If the tide is coming in,
 What a thunder! What a din!
 With the slappings and the swishes,
 Creeping slowly and a thin
 Line of little forward breakers
 Licking onward up the sand
 Like the fingers of a hand
 Tapping where they'll soon be takers
 For the sea has grabbed the land.
 Up beyond the sand and eel-grass
 Is a sunny little town
 Built of palm-tree and palmetto.
 It's a city here *in petto*,
 With its huts all golden brown,
 And above, upon the thatches
 Of its roofs are purple patches
 Where the bougainvillea's wown
 Light-heeled seeds to wax and bloom
 there,
 Always finding ample room there
 For the forest's fleecy down.

Here were Indians long ago
 In the days before a prow,
 Topped by carven saint or sinner,
 Sailed across the Spanish Main.
 When the caravels and galleons
 Of an overweening Spain
 Had not found the precious metals
 Of the Incas, or in vain
 Wasted men and blood and treasure
 Forcing Indians from their leisure
 Just to glut the greed of gain.
 When the opal orchid petals
 Were no scientific find,
 But a shimmer in the wind.
 Ere the feet of dappled stallions
 Set the print of iron shoe
 On a sandy sunken shore,
 But the dappled stallions waited
 All in vain, for they were fated
 To recross the sea no more.
 And their masters often died
 Waiting with them, side by side,
 An emaciated crew.
 All that happened long ago.
 Now the vessels, to and fro,
 Come as punctually as clock-work
 Or at least they mean to do.
 And they carry under hatches
 All things needed by the cities
 They have planted on the sands.
 And the monasteried monks,
 Hearing tales in quiet cells,
 Whispered low in broken snatches
 To an undertone of bells
 From some wanderer overseas,
 Find their hearts moved by strange pities
 At the listening to these,
 And they volunteer in bands
 To convert the simple dwellers
 Of these unimagined lands,
 Worshipping as they should not.
 Manner bringers, pardon sellers,
 Vessels carry them in hordes
 With a zeal that's piping hot.
 Bishops lay aside their croziers,
 Hew palmettos into boards,
 Build them churches as a duty,
 Fill them with whatever booty
 They can find of silk or wax,
 Woolen fabric, cloth of flax,
 Goods of tailors, mercers, hosiers,
 In the bottoms that come in,
 And for payment wink at sin.
 So the church grows, hung with feathers
 Woven by the tired Indians,

Lined with these and Spanish leathers,
 For at bargains none are keener
 Than the potentates of churches.
 So it was with Carthagera.
 On a hill that rises straightly
 From the town, it stands in stately
 Isolation, gazing far
 All across the stretching ocean.
 Privateers and men of war,
 Lost in reckoning, see its spire
 Burning like a sacred fire
 From the broad-leaved palms which rise
 Just to where the windowed eyes
 Stare forever out to sea.
 And the captain calls his people,
 Points to where that far-off shining
 Glitters like a distant star,
 Tells them, not without emotion,
 That he knows now where they are,
 They may cease their long repining
 For that shimmering has been a
 Joy to many, 'tis the steeple
 Of the Church of Carthagera.
 Sailors call the sunny flame
 By another, fragrant name:
 When the sparkle in the sky
 First appears, they raise a cry
 "Look! It is our Lady's eye!"
 "The Madonna of the Ships" —
 So she is to sailors' lips.
 And indeed she is a sweetly
 Lovely image, most discreetly
 Veiled in gauzy stars and roses
 With an iridescent cloak,
 Made, at least so one supposes,
 Noticing its changing sheen —
 Ruby sometimes, sometimes green —
 Of the wings of humming-birds.
 From the hem of it, there poke
 Little shoes of gold and blue,
 Sewn with gems, not one or two,
 But a toe-full flashing through
 The beholder's head as though
 He were watching the rainbow.
 On her head a crown is set
 Where great moons of carven jet
 Are in fact no jet at all,
 But black opals; and the fall
 Of her wimple wrought of lace
 Half obscures her wondrous face.
 Only-half, for there's her mouth,
 And her nose, an awkward feature
 For so heavenly a creature:
 There's a sauciness of shape,
 And the tip points upward slyly,

But her mouth is most demurely
Small and wistful, yet to see it
Is to know a sudden drouth.
But the priest, who's old and wily,
If you question him says, "Surely
God has ordered, and so be it!"
Glorious, excellent Madonna,
She of ships, and furious oceans,
Here at the Antipodes,
How should she resemble these
Dim Cathedral Virgins, hearing
Ancient fly-blown sins forever,
Snivelled into their dull ears
For eternities of years.
Sins here have a different flavour.
We must cast our hide-bound notions
Of her manner of appearing.
Here she is in perfect semblance
Of what she should be, her lips
Frame her name, or its resemblance:
"The Madonna of the Ships."

But there is a curious story
You may hear about the streets.
Though they tell it to her glory,
Every second man one meets
Winks his eye when you address him
Speaking of her brave attire,
And if you go on and press him,
He will cross himself and say
'Tis no wonder, for the day
That the pirate ship caught fire
At the entrance of the bay
Was when last the priests arrayed her
Newly for a festival
Offered for the town's escape
From a sacking; they displayed her
In the morning. All agape,
Lacking reason's wherewithal
To digest this information,
You may beg for farther light
On so dim a revelation.
But your man is nothing loth,
For his city's praise and pride,
To detail upon his oath
What no citizen will hide:
The possession of a Blessing
Such as nowhere else can be,
Not in any place soever
All along that spacious sea,
At no river-mouth or harbour
Of that many-harboured sea.
So you learn that that same night
For a space of several hours
The high altar was deserted,

Not a trace of waxy image,
Only dropped and withered flowers
Shaken from her feather cape.
Then the church's doors were closed,
But a panic was averted
For the priests gave out she dozed
Being weary. All that night
The priests knelt and said their masses,
Swung their censers left and right,
Moved before the empty altar
With their passes and reprises,
And their sacred palms and drossing.
A great wind outside was moaning,
And the whirled palm-trees catching
On the walls, their great leaves catching
In the flimsy window shutters
Streams of rain poured from the gutters
One young priest began to falter
Fearing doom or miracle,
Or a Demon out of Hell.
But his fellows, chanted on
Onson for onson.
Suddenly a fearful gale
Shook the church, and furious hail
Rattled on the wooden roof.
Like a squad of eager devils
Spitting flame from horn to hoof
Showering down a thousand evils
And a window burst asunder
There was heard a peal of thunder,
A distracting, dooming thunder,
Bearing omen in its rolling,
Tolling dolefully and slowly,
While the church stood slightly under
Thus reverberate and wholly
Overhanging dome of thunder.
Every post and rafter quivered,
And the leather hangings slivered.
So protracted was the thunder,
Such an everlasting thunder,
That the priests both old and young
Were quite paralyzed of tongue,
And they ceased their weary singing,
Saying nothing after that
Truth to tell, they fell down flat.
Each one wanted to be hid,
None saw what the others did
Each priest's eyes were shut, each prayed
But the storm seemed to be hid
For a perfect calm was there.
Not a flutter nipped the air
Which appeared to hold its breath
Folding round them like a wreath
From the open window where
The palmetto leaf hung in

Still as stone, but dripping wet.
 And the dripping made a noise
 Like a nail which strikes on tin
 Or a tinkling little bell
 Palpitating for a spell
 From some lonely hermitage
 At the bottom of a dell.
 And the pause endured an age,
 Till each priest was moved to see,
 Dared once more to look and see,
 What that tinkling noise might be.
 And they saw the altar set
 For high mass and on it standing
 Their dear Lady, and her poise
 Was that of a flying gull
 Just an instant after landing.
 The priests gasped: "A Miracle!"
 Sobbing, kneeling down before
 Their Madonna, on the floor.
 But the image made no sign,
 Only her far-looking eyes
 Gazed upon them with benign
 Pleasantness, as one who sighs
 And, in sighing, smiles again,
 Pitiful to mortal men.
 But they might not long indulge
 Their great wonder and alarm,
 Which no telling may divulge,
 Seeing her escaped from harm.
 For the old priest bade them haste
 To relieve their Lady's plight
 From the ravage of the night.
 She was mud from foot to waist,
 In her crown long weeds were tangled,
 One of her bejewelled shoes
 Was not there, and sea-shells jangled
 Caught upon her feathered dress.
 No time this to stare and pray,
 Even though the wits confuse,
 She must be well comforted,
 Cherished, cosseted, and tended
 Now her voyaging is ended,
 Bathed, and combed, and clothed, and
 fed
 With the sacred wine and bread.
 Awed before her holiness,
 Frightened priests ran to obey,
 Getting in each other's way
 In their eagerness to serve her,
 Be the one most to deserve her.
 In the end the task was done;
 And the instant that the sun,
 Calculated to exalt her,
 Shone upon the wooden altar,
 There they placed her reverently,

Crossing breast and bowing knee
 To their "Lady of the Sea"
 Blazoned in new finery.
 When the clock that hung inside
 The tall steeple stood at ten,
 The church door was opened wide,
 Everyone could enter then,
 And the priests were told the news:
 How the pirates nearly came
 To the city, when a flame
 Burst up from the nearing ship;
 How they let the cable slip
 Trying to put the fire out;
 How the ship went on the shore
 Lacking room to put about;
 That the drowned were a full score,
 And the others clapped in jail.
 So the populace filed slowly
 Past the altar, meek and lowly,
 Saying "Mary, Mary, Hail!"
 And the young priest, cold and pale,
 Whispered the thing that befell,
 How it was a miracle!
 But the old priest said, "'Tis well,"
 joining ancient finger-tips,
 "Bless our Lady of the Ships!"

TUNE

There's a lilt abroad in my head to-night
 Like a nodding columbine,
 It joins to no words, it draws no breath
 From any idea of mine.
 Yet it crosses and recrosses through my
 brain
 With a sweetness of mulberry wine.

There are tapping red heels in the heart
 of this tune,
 And the flirt of flickered fans,
 There are meadows a-spray with a but-
 tercup June
 And halted caravans,
 Where a gipsy fiddle cries "down the
 middle"
 To a light that is Aldebaran's.

'Tis a tune to wake mummied kings and
 make
 Fra Angelico's angels by scores
 Cease their harping and hymns and in-
 duge in the whims
 Of a *bal masqué*, Louis Quatorze,
 Where the little devils of rhythm perch
 On the shoes of ambassadors.

Pavans? No! No! Nor sarabands,
Nor minuets for me,
But capriccioso, a stamping bolero
With a crowd come in to see,
And the moon winking over a curtain's
edge
Like a peeping Tom Mercury.

Not a thought, no words, not anything
But a lilt in my head to-night.
Inconsequent as a butterfly's wing
Or the skim of a meteorite.
Put me down as the slave of a toss and
a tune
A humble neophyte
With the trees and the breeze, as
Terpsichore's
Dedicate eremite.

But, listen, the gusty wind is hushed,
The corn is stiff and still,
The moon like a beetle upside down
Sheds no more light on the hill,
And a little goblin spirited thought
Steals in against my will
Arousing me to the sight of inimical day.
Give the goblin creature its breakfast then,
I say,
And loaded with morning I crawl upon
my way
To the world where men ravel and rave
but none of them dares to play.

GRIEVANCE

All these years I have remembered a night
When islands ran black into a sea of silk,
A bay and an open roadstead set to a
shimmer like cool, white silk
Under an August moon.
Trees lifted themselves softly into the
moonlight,
A vine on the balcony glittered with a
scattered brilliance,
The roofs of distant houses shone solidly
like ice.
Wind passed,
It touched me.
The touch of the wind was cool, im-
personal;
The fingers of the wind brushed my face
and left me.
I remember that I shivered,
And that the long, continuous sound of
the sea beneath the cliff

Seemed the endless breathing of the days
I must live through alone.
I grieve for that night as for something
wasted.
You are with me now, but that was
twenty years ago,
And the future is shortened by many days.
I no longer fear the length of them,
I dread the swiftness of their departure.
But they go—go—
With the thunderous rapidity of a water-
fall,
And scarcely can we find a slow, cool
night
To consider ourselves,
And the peaceful shining of the moon
Along a silken sea.

PARADOX

You are an amethyst to me,
Beating dark slabs of purple
Against quiet smoothnesses of heliotrope.
Sending the wine-colour of torches
Rattling up against an avalanche of pale
windy leaves.

You enter my heart as twilight
Seeping softly among the ghosts of beeches
In a glade where the last light cleaves for
an instant upon the swung lash of a
waterfall.
You oversweep me with the splendid
flashing of your darkness,
And my flowers are tinted with the light
of your thin grey moon.

An amethyst garden you are to me,
And in your sands I write my poems.
And plant my heart for you in deathless
yew trees
That their leaves may shield you from
the falling snow.

Open your purple palaces for my enter-
tainment,
Welcome my feet upon your polished
floors,
And keep in your brazier always
One red hot coal;
For I come at the times which suit me,
Morning or evening,
And I am cold when I come down the
long alleys to you.

Clang the doors against the multitude
 who would follow me.
 Is not this my chamber where I would
 sleep?

HIPPOCRENE

With you,
 I sup on singing birds
 And drink hot sunlight cooled with clouds.

With you,
 I ride the slanting winds,
 Toss coloured balls back and forth over
 the moon,
 Swing up through trees,
 And slide down swiftly upon beds of
 irises.

When you are here,
 we stack words at the end of a
 rainbow
 And bowl at them with swans' eggs.

We run races through grass
 to old bronze temples,
 And sitting under marble porches,
 Count daisy petals
 to the tapping of a bell.

We leap from steeples,
 And land in flowered palaces.

In cedar-scented parlours you tell me
 tales,
 Long, slow tales,
 strummed lightly on a lute;
 And I lie on blue cushions and watch the
 sea
 and hear your voice.

With you,
 I do all these things —
 How therefore should I care
 to gabble with the donkey-men,
 To gossip with the old women
 who sell turkeys,
 To watch my next-door neighbour plait
 her hair
 and lament the untoward price of
 butter.

Until you come I will sit here
 alone, by a quiet window,
 And, with a fine brush,
 trace little pictures
 To show when you return.

THORN PIECE

Cliffs,
 Cliffs,
 And a twisted sea
 Beating under a freezing moon.
 Why should I,
 Sitting peaceful and warm,
 Cut my heart on so sharp a tune?

Liquid lapping of seething fire
 Eating the heart of an old beech-tree,
 Crack of icicles under the eaves,
 Dog-wind whining eerily.

The oaks are red, and the asters flame.
 And the sun is warm on bark and stones.
 There's a Hunter's Moon abroad to-
 night —
 The twigs are snapping like brittle bones.

You carry a lantern of rose-green glass,
 Your dress is red as a Cardinal's cloak.
 I kneel at the trace of your feet on the
 grass,
 But when I would sing you a song, I
 choke.

Choke for the fragile careless years
 We have scattered so easily from our
 hands.
 They flutter like leaves through an
 Autumn sun,
 One by one, one by one.

I have lived in a place,
 I shall die in a place,
 I have no craving for distant lands.
 But a place is nothing, not even space,
 Unless at its heart a figure stands

Swinging a rose-green lantern for me.
 I fear the fall of a rose-green gate,
 And the cry of a cliff-driven, haunted sea,
 And the crackle of ice while I wait —
 wait!

Your face is flowers and singing sun,
 Your hands are the cool of waters falling.
 If the rose-green bars should drop be-
 tween
 Would you know that I was calling?

For the stars I see in that sky are black.
 The kind earth holds me and laughs in
 my ear.

I have nothing to do with the planet's
track,
I only want you, my Dear.

Beyond is a glaze, but here is fire,
And love to comfort, and speech to bind,
And the common things of morning and
evening,
And the light of your lantern I always
find.

One or the other — then let it be me,
For I fear the whirl of the cliff-wrung sea,
And the biting night. You smile at my
fears,
But the years — years —
Like leaves falling.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

What is the thing I would say to you
Ere the time when we can say nothing at
all,

Neither you to me nor I to you,
And between us is sprung a smoky wall?
If I am left, I shall push the mist
And crack my eyes to a gimlet point
Striving to pierce its every twist
And bore a hole through some weakened
joint.

But I know very well it will disappoint
My keenest urge, and I shall be left
Baffled, forsaken, and blind to boot,
But with still the feeling that in some
cleft

You linger and watch and maybe hear
The dim and feeble substitute
For speech which may travel from sphere
to sphere

And hold itself perpetual
Merging the there and here.

I am counted one who is good at words,
And yet, in placing my thought of you
Where I can see it, hard and clear,
This, that, and the other, in review,
I think that only the songs of birds
Are adequate for the task which I
Can never even make the attempt
To come at ever so haltingly.
I earn my own contempt
That I should presume to try.

You have lifted my eyes, and made me
whole,
And given me purpose, and held me faced

Toward the horizon you once had placed
As my aim's grand measure. Your starry
truth

Has shown me the worm-holes in Earth's
apple,

You have soothed me when I dared not
look,

And forced me on to seek and grapple
With the nightmare doubts which block
the ways

Of a matrix-breaking, visioning soul
When, lacking the arrogance of youth,
I started to carve the granite days
Into tablets of a book.

The hundred kindly daily things,
I have numbered them all though I may
not speak them.

Sitting here on this Christmas Eve,

I think of you asleep above,

And the house has a gentleness which
clings,

And a wide content of love.

What you have said and what you have
done,

I should not have known enough to seek
them,

But now the very rooms you leave

Have a peace which hangs like a hyacinth
bent

All about them.

Your ways, your thoughts.

I would surely rather lose the sun

Than be without them.

So absolutely is it I am bent

To know how you are excellent.

Dearest, I have written it down
For your Christmas Day, but not half is
said.

I might write so long it would span the
town

And yet scarce mention more than a
shred

Of you and you, and you and me;

And of all that I know so well to be,
How wretchedly I have scratched the
stone!

You must know the end instead.

A NEW YEAR'S CARD

Everyone has his fancies, I suppose,
And to-night I should like to walk round
a towered city

Blowing a blue silver trumpet.
 Then, when all the people had run out
 To see me circling the walls
 Playing on a blue trumpet,
 I would stop and sing them a song all
 about your loveliness.
 I would make it of the flicker of the air
 and the sweep of the sun,
 And when I had finished, they would see
 you sitting on a cloud
 And know how far you surpassed others
 in everything.
 But there is no towered city,
 And I have no blue trumpet,
 And those who meet you seem to feel
 about you much as I do without the
 aid of these accessories,
 Which proves how very useless a thing
 a poet is, after all.

FACT

Sea-roses blowing on a high, white cliff
 Rayed out above their leaves, bent by a
 whiff
 Of salty wind. White snowdrops over
 snow.
 The colour of a field where violets grow.
 The tingling rings of honeysuckle bines.
 Cloud shadows drawing over Apennines.
 Young paper birches, with their lusted
 stems
 Brightening old woods . . . But smiles
 like these
 Are stock in trade with all poets. If you
 please,
 Therefore, we'll put aside such brum-
 magens
 And merely state a proven certainty,
 Which is that you are fine exceedingly
 And all that matters in Heaven or Earth
 to me.

HERALDIC

I have often a vision of your face,
 Seen through the crossing branches of
 young trees.
 Your face, as a white, flowing water,
 At a little distance, beyond the reeds of
 a shallow shore.
 Ironical, my lady, that Spring, the barb
 and whet-stone of my love,
 Should net you from me in leaves and
 whisperings!

Yet I would not lose even this,
 Although the sight and leashing tease
 me to madness.

QUINCUNX

A lady was given a shell which kept in
 its convolutions
 The dash and sucking of waves.
 At first the lady played with it,
 Putting it to her ear.
 But soon tiring of this,
 She gave it into the hands of a skilful
 carver
 Who fashioned out of it an intaglio of
 great beauty;
 This the lady set in a band of gold
 And placed in a cabinet for all to admire.
 Now people praise the delicate gem and
 pass on,
 And it lies on its velvet,
 Flat, and cold, and admirable;
 But the fresh sound of waves
 Is no longer about it.

CARREFOUR

O you,
 Who came upon me once
 Stretched under apple-trees just after
 bathing,
 Why did you not strangle me before
 speaking
 Rather than fill me with the wild white
 honey of your words
 And then leave me to the mercy
 Of the forest bees?

GRANADILLA

I cut myself upon the thought of you
 And yet I come back to it again and
 again.
 A kind of fury makes me want to draw
 you out
 From the dimness of the present
 And set you sharply above me in a wheel
 of roses.
 Then, going obviously to inhale their
 fragrance,
 I touch the blade of you and cling upon
 it,
 And only when the blood runs out across
 my fingers
 Am I at all satisfied.

CAUSTIC

Certainly you gave me your heart,
 I don't in the least deny it.
 And a splendid heart it was,
 Of white sea jade strewn over with ochre
 shadings and polished to the tip touch
 of brilliance.
 I strung it on my watch-chain.
 But then, I seldom wear a watch nowa-
 days;
 I do not need it to tell that the black
 sun
 Is sinking into a sea of garnet flame.

ONE! TWO! THREE!

Poems,
 Poems,
 What are poems but words
 Set edgewise up like children's blocks
 To build a structure no one can inhabit.

I fling you words,
 Raw and bleeding
 Out of my desolation.
 'Tock! Tock! The clock is no more mo-
 notonous than I,
 Beating your name to every new vibra-
 tion,
 Aching upon remembrance with a dura-
 bility
 Which wears a knife-edge all along each
 shouting nerve.

Day and night wind round upon my lone-
 liness
 Coiling me in a serpent strangle of time.
 One morning opens like another:
 Sun on each wet bush and tree;
 They laugh and rustle,
 But I shut my eyes.
 How wide the sky is!
 And all that way the sun must go
 Before another day will have been ended.

Lamps, work, and sunrise,
 And again — again —
 Always again, and each day tastes like
 powder
 Brittle and salt.
 And each night goes like water
 Weeping along a heavy wall of stone.

And nothing comes.
 It cannot come,

Since you are all that ever could have
 come.
 I count them — one, two, three, and
 ten's a bundle;
 A tally of burnt sticks
 A heap of twigs,
 With not one little bell-flower nodding
 up between them.

So then I take my blocks
 And neatly place them
 One balancing another.
 I mock that ghastly clock and make a
 cupola of windows
 And out of each I gaze awhile
 Looking down long roads for you.
 Then I put in a paved forecourt-yard,
 And lay my smoothest squares,
 And plant wide borders of campanulas.
 But what I plant is nothing;
 What comes up
 Is fire-weed.
 How often have I seen it
 Glaring above the silver-grey of rotted
 boards
 Where a deserted farmhouse
 Was falling gently.
 Each year a little more of it would settle.

Tush! This is fooling.
 Words,
 Words,
 I think I hate them.
 You cannot live in them,
 And so they are no more to me
 Than spiders' webs:
 Tall, floating, ghostly webs.
 Hanging above the candles of a church
 When someone's to be buried.

Therefore I will put my words away,
 And count the ticking of the clock
 As men count pins in solitary cells.
 To-morrow it may rain
 And then, at least,
 I shall not have to watch the terribly
 slow spanning
 Of the sun
 Across that reach of sky.

ALTERNATIVES

You mistake me, Madame, I ask for
 nothing.
 I give arrogantly and with indifference.

These are no wall-fruits, soft and sugary,
 I offer you,
 But dragon-berries,
 Burnt black with their own fire,
 Crowned on brambles in the Courts of
 Destiny.

You may refuse them if you please,
 Since choice is not denied you.
 Then you will be lone as a rattling leaf
 On an upland oak-tree,
 Flinging its single shadow
 Across a treeless snow.

THRENODY

On an evening of black snow
 I walked along the causeway,
 Wishing that I too might melt
 Between the agitated fingers
 Of a stuttering, intolerable sea.

TANKA

Roses and larkspur
 And slender, serried lilies;
 I wonder whether
 These are worth your attention.
 Consider it, and if not —

REFLECTION

Why does my clock persist in marking
 the hour after that which it is?
 Scornful clock!
 Do you wish to remind me that there is
 never any present,
 Only a future and a long, long past?

PASTIME

*"Whose pretty pawn is this
 And what shall be done to redeem it?"*
 CHILDREN'S GAME

I am immoderately fond of this place.
 My thoughts run under it like the roots
 of trees and grasses,
 They spread above it like fluttering, in-
 consequential leaves.
 Spring comes to me with the blossoming
 of the snow-drop under the arbor-vitæ.
 So all Springs come, and ever must do,
 Spring ripens with the crocus cups on
 the South lawn,
 Blue and white crocuses, remains of an
 ancient garden,
 By the side of an ancient house —
 So they told me, so I believed.

That shadowy structure holds a distant
 charm,
 I see its walls printed upon the air, in
 certain moods,
 And build it back into solidity with awed
 enjoyment.
 But that is fairy-tale or history,
 And I am more concerned with recollection.

How perpetually the seasons mark them.
 selves!

Tulips for April,
 Peonies for May.

The pillar-rose has not lacked its robin's
 nest since I remember,
 Nor the pink horse-chestnut its mob of
 honey-bees:

The boom of them is essence of sleep
 and flowers,
 Of Summer sleep and poetry mixed to-
 gether.

Yet there are differences even in the
 repeated lilt of time.
 I seem to think the humming-birds are
 fewer,
 And I have not seen a luna-moth for
 years.

Now, suddenly, here is a grosbeak
 Perched in the double-cherry near the
 door.

He suggests that I look him over,
 His striped black and white,
 His rose-red triangle of waistcoat.
 He is clearly on view for commendation,
 Displaying himself as though I were his
 wife or his tailor

Observing to pronounce a verdict.
 I had contemplated second childhood,
 But scarcely believed it imminent,
 And here I am plunged in it.
 A rose-breasted grosbeak indeed,
 And the last I saw was in that long, first
 childhood.

Senility may have its compensations,
 I shall hunt up my old butterfly-net
 And prow about to-night seeking luna-
 moths.

AFTER AN ILLNESS

TO A CAT FROM WHOM ONE HAS BEEN
 SEPARATED FOR A LONG TIME

I have come back, Winky.
 After a long time — yes.

There was a heavy sodden sea,
 And I in the midst of it.
 Before me, white snakes swam in a slime
 of seaweed.
 They drew their bodies through the sea-
 weed with a dreadful rustle
 Like dead leaves on sand,
 And left long open lanes behind them
 Which glowed a clotted purple
 Under the rays of a bursting, half-sunk
 sun.
 Somewhere, on the right, were shores
 With high glass cliffs.
 The cliffs were hot and leapt up and
 down unceasingly,
 And the heat from them blistered my
 body
 Even under the water as I swam.
 A wind rose
 And drove the weeds faster upon me,
 And I struggled in fear of the snakes who
 came swiftly — swiftly —
 Then I sank down somewhere out of the
 sea
 Into a place of mist.
 I was blind,
 But my ears were shrunken points of
 awareness,
 I was anguished by the keenness of my
 ears,
 For all round were loud voices
 Shouting harsh, unintelligible things
 Which I strove to understand, but could
 not.
 I trod upon the voices,
 But they shifted like pebbles beneath my
 feet.
 I fought with them,
 Flinging them from me,
 Pushing them down with my hands.
 At last I had them under me and I was
 rising —
 I saw nothing, but I was rising —
 Then my mouth choked with salt,
 And the salt entered my eyes and unsealed
 them.
 Light was an explosion in my brain,
 And I floated again in the seaweed
 sea
 Under the bloody cliffs which leapt like
 flame.
 Now I am sitting in a room again,
 With fire-light fluttering on the walls
 And you in my lap — purring.

Little cat, are you as glad to have me to
 lie upon
 As I am to feel your fur under my hand?
 Your purr sounds like the blowing of
 feathers in a wind;
 It is a strangely comfortable sound,
 And there is no other,
 For the night smiles and says nothing.

"RODE THE SIX HUNDRED"

A June-bug has just flown in through my
 window,
 And to-day I sat among narcissus and
 grape-hyacinths
 Drinking the sudden sun.
 The terrible Winter has passed
 Flinging my garden full of flowers
 But for me I think it will not be long,
 Not long,
 Before it is the end.

Ah, my flowers!

THE SILENT HUSBAND

The gifts of Heaven to you and me have
 not been equal.
 You play your table-lute even when it is
 stringless,
 With the movement of your hands draw-
 ing forth the five-coloured sounds which
 delight you.
 Your Unworthy One is dull,
 She hears only what is.
 I beg you, therefore, my Lord,
 Speak the words which I am fain to
 believe abide in your heart.

THE "PLUM-BLOSSOM" CONCUBINE WRITES TO THE EMPERER MING HUANG

I have painted my eyebrows like willow-
 leaves to delight you.
 I have painted them like cassia-leaves to
 attract your fancy.

Now the leaves of all the trees have
 fallen,
 And snow hisses from the sky.

My Lord,
 Could you look in this mirror,
 You would see

My face, white as heaped snow,
My lips, red as sunset
Between peaks of ice.

OLD EXAMINATION HALL

CHINA

Thickly green is the moss on the corroded
roof-tiles of this hall,
Loud, loud, the cry of the wind striking
and moving the hinges of the old doors,
Silver as evening mist the spiders' webs
spun about the corners.

They broke their hearts here, bending
over the pen-brushes,
They tore their hearts upon the glittering
words of the T'ang poets,
They went mad, babbling Confucius and
Mencius to the cold clouds passing
above an open window.

All this they did to wear a violet coat
and a belt-clasp of agate stones set in
rubies.

Now through the windy hall sucks a ca-
dence of falling seas,
Seas withdrawn along an ancient shore,
Backward seas
Turned,
Running in great strides upon a bold and
distant continent.

PILLAR PRINTS

THE CUT SHADOW

Who sees the metal of the Temple mirrors
Across the blowing lustre of reflected
trees?

So those who look into my heart
See only the faint, surging vision of your
face.

LUSTRE

Your face to me is like the slope of a
snow-mountain
In moonlight.
You, too, I cannot look at steadily.

ACCOLADE

"The garden was admirable," she said,
nine hundred years ago,
And in saying so, made it immortal.

GREEN SHADOWS

The moon on the very white sand of the
garden
Is more pleasing to my eyes
Than the silver embroidered dress of the
Lady Yasurahi,
Since she permits the Lieutenant-General
of the Right Bodyguard
To row her in his boat.

DEBIT

Passing my nights with books,
The morning moon brings a sad greeting.

PAYMENT

After a night of labour
Better a misty sky than a white sunrise.

THE AUTUMN HEART

Faint and far the cry of the migrating
geese,
Neither do they come near my house.

TO TWO UNKNOWN LADIES

Ladies, I do not know you, and I think
I do not want to. And a strange begin-
ning
I make with that. Admitted; there's the
odds.

You live between the covers of a book,
At least for me, but then I've known a
crowd
Of other people who do that. My mind
Is stuffed with phantoms out of poets'
brains.

But you are out of nothing but the air,
Or were, rather, for one of you is dead.
Dead or alive, it is the same to me,
Since all our contact lies in printer's ink.

But even this, peculiar as it is,
Is but a thread of singularity.
Here is another, that I see you double,
Each one beheld in profile, as it were.
And yet the full-face view is not com-
posite,
But shows two totally specific halves
Which do not blend and still are not
distinct.

And again why should I perplex my eyes
With trying so hard to draw you both
together

As though you were a lighted candle,
split
Upon an oculist's dissecting spectacles?

You see the thing is really not so simple
As A.B.C., or Keats, or "Christabel,"
And that is where the plague comes in
for me.

For here, sitting quite calmly in my chair,
Settled down comfortably to an evening's
reading,

I open up the queerest possibility,
Namely: the visitation of a ghost.
Suppose I throw you down the glove at
once

And say I'm haunted, does that bring
the answer?

If so, it blurs beyond what I can grasp
And foggy answers leave us where we
were.

If either of you much attracted me
We could fall back upon phenomena
And make a pretty story out of psychic
Balances, but not to be too broad
In my discourtesy, nor prudish neither
(Since, really, I can hardly quite suppose
With all your ghostliness you follow me),
I feel no such attraction. Or if one
Bows to my sympathy for the briefest
space,

Snap—it is gone! And, worst of all to
tell,

What broke it is not in the least dislike
But utter boredom.

Now I acknowledge you are sensible,
And so I put it squarely; is there not
A strange absurdity in being haunted
By ghosts who crack one's jaws upon a
yawn?

If that were all of it! But nothing's all.
For just as I am oozing into sleep,
See-sawing gently out of consciousness,
A phrase of yours will laugh out loud and
clang

Me broad awake. And still there's more
to come:

Sometimes I catch the faintest whiff of
flutes.

And that I hold to be a paradox.

Did ever ladies lead so dull a life
As you? At least according to my taste
(I'll be polite enough to put it so).

You wrote, but, Great Saint Peter, tell
me how!

With half a destiny. Now we, poor devils,
Fill our ink-wells with entrails, pour our
veins

To wet a pencil point, and end at last
As shrivelled as a pod of money-wort,
And (let me say this in a neat aside)
We hope as shining. So do artists live,
And skulls are best when turned to flower-
pots.

Now your way: Half a year, or more, or
less;

A book tossed off between two sets of
terris,

Or jotted down some morning of hard
frost

When the hounds could not run. Pale
Jesus Christ,

Is this an effort worthy to be classed
Beyond the writing of cake recipes?

One of you painted. Well, you have no
shame

To call such trash a picture. Years and
years

You studied with the patient, stupid zeal
Of every amateur, and to this day
You never guess how badly you have done.

You speak of music, and my nerve-ends
sting

Thinking of Chopin sentimentalized
By innocent young ladyhood; of Liszt
Doted upon, his tinsel rhodomontade
Held for high romance. And the ghastly
nights

On cracked hotel pianos! It would be
Experience to read of washier stuff.

And yet—and yet—this clearly is not
all,

Or why should I go back to you again,
Evening and evening, in a kind of thirst,
Surprising my tongue upon an almond
taste.

A puzzling business. Everything comes
back

And hooks upon a question. I suspect
Myself of cheating, stacking a full pack
With diamond Jacks extraordinary and
Queens

Of Spades enough to make a declaration
Of quite superb inviolability.

But if the pack were dealt again, what then?

So what's the truth behind my set of it,
If I can keep my eyes clear long enough
To get a squirt thereat? Almonds, I said,
Smooth, white, and bitter, wonderfully
almonds.

Your fingers were unequal to the task
Of fashioning pictures, they were not
enough.

For pictures take the whole and whip it
round

To something out of you; and this you
could

Contrive, but not as artists, since this
thing

Was not your making. You were pig-
ment, line.

I will not split you up to parts and parts,
Suffice it that the pictures here are you.
Double and single, like chrysanthemums,
Each of one family, but with just dif-
ferences

Of colour and habit and the arch of stem.

Two halves, I said, and here I patterned
rightly.

A frail half and a virile, but both shoots
Of one straight mother tree. It is your
nobleness

That shocks a fire across these photo-
graphs

And makes them a contentment for
strained eyes

Hurt by the ugliness of crowds in streets,
Stumbling short-sighted in a group of
gargoyles.

You might have posed for caryatides,
With wind-drawn garments sucking round
your limbs,

Your beauty blushing through their flat-
tened gauze,

Before a temple, on a sunny day.

I wonder I am Greek enough to feel
Such solace in mere outline. But again,
As always where I find you are concerned,
This does not finish your effect. For
when

I write down Greek, it is inadequate.
Marble you are, but there's that jet of
fire

Like a red sunset on a fall of snow.
I feel a wind blowing off heather hills,

Am vaguely conscious of the moan of
waves,
And seaweed fronds pulsating in a pool.
Now this, of course, is anything but
Greek.

Horses and dogs! You say yourself that
they

Are stuck with limpet-closeness to your
life.

And there, I think, is more than parallel.
For dogs and horses have a wistfulness,
A pathos, in their bursts of gaiety
Which tears the heart, even when crinky-
tail

Sets dogs in bundles racing round a lawn,
Or snaps a horse's feet to jiggling springs
Cat-dancing with a sudden twitch of ears.
And you are both like that, for your jokes
bob

Under taut flags across a bay of tears.

That figure is so old, I feel a twinge
Of hot compunction at using it again.
But even artists stub their toes sometimes
Upon the fallen centuries, and Helen
Was much considered by the youth of
Troy.

I think perhaps your prototypes in Sparta
Called forth that metaphor. But let it
pass.

It is a fact that my eyes itch and burn
At this of you on horseback. Foolish!

Oh,
Shall you call it folly at this time of day,
You, who tell tales of banshees in a park!

Again a facet. Like a lapidary
I cut and cut in microscopic flakes,
But never get the gem for all these sides.
There's more to you than single flesh and
blood

Though these be fine and clear as new-
stripped almonds.

And more than tears; but what it is
drifts out

Beyond the surf-line of my consciousness
And blurs in dazzle so I lose its edge.

The puzzle grows as I unravel it,
For all these feelings come out of a book
And you, who cannot write, have written
it.

There's food for many solitary munchings,
And sticks to beat an artist's soul withal.

You cannot write, and look what you
have written:

Two lives which stare and twinkle on the
page

So that I blind in looking. That's a glare
To put out farthing candles of profes-
sionals.

Had I not seen your drawings, I might
almost

Have been bewitched by that hotel piano
And guessed you better understood your
Chopin.

Now I am all at sea again and clinging
To horses and a cat-leap at a fence.

Well, there it stands, and what I get is
life,

And love held back and breaking up and
out.

Your heart is never on your sleeve, you
say;

But try your hardest, it is in your pen,
And death is nothing to vitality

Swinging across a second heart. At best
One sees a breeding like those draperies
Which cool my naked caryatides.

Why, I'm not dead, but merely gone in
space

And that you slap away with easy hand
Drawing me closer much than you intend.

Perhaps the very queerest of these facts
Is that I feel apologies are due

For just this thing which wakes my ad-
miration.

You do not want me crowding in behind
That carefully embroidered sleeve, and yet

What I behold mounts to a blazing altar,
And both are there before it, worship-
ping.

Will you forgive this little pinch of in-
cense,

For one of you is dead and she will know,
Perhaps, at least, what magic brought
me here.

And I will never seek to meet the other,
I only write to exorcise a ghost.

WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE

He told me, one night, when we were off
duty,

And with a pride which might have been
Lord Nelson's

Detailing Emma to a fellow Admiral —

Only that's one thing Nelson never did —
And Lady Hamilton was gold and rubies
While this girl was a circus-rider's spangles,
As real as they, at least not one whit
more so,

And he, poor boy, as far from Nelson's
honour.

Well, there you have it, tucked up in our
tent,

Propping our spurs against an iron stove-
pipe

And talking as I'm wishing now we
hadn't.

But he was at it, and I couldn't stop him.
I swear the fellow's talk became quite

lyric,
A sort of chucking stars, and into saw-
dust —

It seemed to me the lady was no better;
She scuffled underneath a press of foot-
steps,

His among others. I had liked him hugely.
A great, big, honest, rather clumsy chap.

Just off of middle-age, and such a baby,
Playing the soldier in a uniform,

And playing it damned well, you under-
stand;

We had no better in the regiment.
I used to chuckle just to see him acting

His own ideal. But somehow as I lis-
tened

The folly in him rasped upon my nerves.
What right had he to be so innocent

To whip a tawdry intrigue up to poetry
And set me shivering who had not got it.

He painted her exactly. I could see
Not only what he said, but what he didn't.

I guessed the sort of talcum-powder
Kind of woman who had picked him up.

Cheap smartness, one who puts her hair
in order

Before shop-windows, and pays for what
she buys

With crumpled bills fished from a small
mesh purse

Whose gold is gilding and wearing off at
that;

Add, too, a passion for gold-tipped cig-
arettes

And blue-sashed bon-bon boxes. But she
was shrewd,

I knew as much because he was so
pleased —

With her, of course, and also with himself.
He saw her Cleopatra on high Nile

Floating between blue lupins, graciously
 According to him, Anthony, her heart.
 And that was just the way he wasn't
 Nelson,
 Who saw her Emma — and nothing else
 at all.
 The thing stopped there, it seemed, for
 he was married
 And decent enough before she came, I
 know.
 He filled the ache in him with high-
 falutin,
 I wondered how long that would satisfy
 And felt his charmer would draw him
 farther in
 To cheques of somewhat high denomina-
 tion
 Paid, naturally, upon receipt of value.
 Well, when he took to glowing like the
 sun
 Upon a hayrick on a Summer morning
 I thought the lady had achieved her
 figure.
 But what I didn't reckon was just the
 man.
 The thing was epic to him now, I saw.
 War and his love — a fearful combina-
 tion
 To snarl the simple structure of his life.
 He twisted to it and turned upon himself
 With such a marvellous gyration, that
 in some way
 He pulled it up to grandeur, and he a-top
 Mystically bright and crowned with bitter
 laurel,
 And all the time, behind, there was his
 wife.
 He got her so at last, fuddled his wits
 To it, that she became the smirch upon
 His unique glory. I used to marvel at
 the paradox
 He'd been cocooning round him, but so
 it was.
 The fellow grew to something greatly
 larger
 Than I could have believed. I never said
 This was a moral tale, you understand,
 It's simply true.
 Well, we went over, both
 In the same company, I Captain to his
 Lieutenant,
 And, in due course, were sent on to the
 front.
 A month went by, and then a bit of
 shell

Took him between the shoulder-blades
 and gouged
 Into a lung and stayed there. We were
 caught,
 A handful of us, right between barrages
 I'd got a leg, or rather hadn't one,
 So there we sat, and cursed, and bled,
 and died.
 I didn't, you observe. Worse luck, per-
 haps.
 I'll never get the joy that fellow had
 Coughing, and spitting, and whimpering
 her name.
 He met that shell toting a wounded ser-
 geant
 Through our barrage, and, coming back,
 it hit.
 Tough luck? Oh, I don't know. He had
 his time.
 When the delirium struck him, I covered
 my ears,
 Hearing a man like that is too close
 cornered,
 Like something naked hurting you with
 beauty.
 It ended then for him, but I came home.
 His wife was cool and stately as a widow.
 The talcum-powder lady changed her
 man.
 And yet I think the person was an artist
 To carve a hero out of what he was
 When she first ran across him. I wonder
 sometimes
 What she can think about it. As for me,
 I always give it up at just this point.
 Poor dear old chap, God bless his silly
 soul.

SILHOUETTE WITH SEPIA BACKGROUND

He moved in, with two thousand books,
 and a bed, and an armchair,
 Into a little room under the roof of the
 great building with the pointed, carved
 stone doorway.
 At eleven o'clock precisely, he would
 come out of the pointed stone doorway
 And cross the street to the Common to
 feed the squirrels,
 Then he would wander on to the Public
 Garden to gaze at the geometrical
 flower-beds.
 He did this every day, and the orange-
 vendor at the corner told the time by

him; it saved crossing Tremont Street
to look up at the clock on Park Street
Church.

One morning he did not come, and the
traffic policeman missed him.

So did the park policeman, and they talked
about it together when they should
have been minding their business.

On the second day, they spoke to the
orange-vendor, but he knew nothing;
It would have been wiser to ask the
pigeons who fly everywhere, but they
never thought of that.

On the third day, they consulted the
janitor, and, come to think of it, the
janitor had not seen him either.

Then the janitor and the park policeman
(for the traffic policeman dared not
leave his post)

Went upstairs together ever so high, a
flight higher than the elevator ran.

They had to break in the door, but that
was no great thing,

It was an old door, and rickety.

They found him sitting quietly in his
chair, with the book he had been
reading fallen on the floor beside him.

He had been dead three days, but only
the pigeons knew that.

AQUATINT FRAMED IN GOLD

Six flights up in an out-of-date apartment
house

Where all the door-jambs and wainscots
are of black walnut

And the last tenant died at the ripe age
of eighty.

Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Crowded into a corner against the
black walnut wainscot.

Surrounded by the household gods of her
family for three generations:

Teak-wood cabinets, rice-paper picture
books, slim, comfortless chairs of
spotted bamboo.

Too many house gods for the space al-
lotted them, exuding an old and
corroding beauty, a beauty faded
and smelling of the past.

Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Accurately telling the time, but for-
getting whether it is to-day or
yesterday.

Sleeping every night in a walnut bedstead
With a headboard like the end of a family
pew;

Waking every morning to the photo-
graphs of dead relations,

Dead relations sifted all over the house,
Accumulated in drifts like dust or snow.

Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Indifferently keeping up an old tra-
dition,

Unconcernedly registering the anni-
versaries of illnesses and deaths,
But omitting the births, they were
so long ago.

The lady is neither young nor old,
She walks like a wax-work among her
crumbling possessions,

She is automatic and ageless like the clock,
And she, too, is of a bygone pattern.

She sits at her frugal dinner,
Careful of its ancient etiquette,
Opposite the portrait of a great-aunt
Done by a forgotten painter.

The portrait lived once, it would seem,
To judge by the coquetry of its attire;

But the lady has always been a wax-work,
Of no age in particular,

But of an unquestioned ancestry.

Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Ironically recording an hour of no
importance.

MINIATURE

Because the little gentleman made nauti-
cal instruments

And lived in a street which ran down to
the sea,

The neighbours called him "Salt Charlie."
I wonder what they would have said if
they had known

That he stole out every evening to a
sweet-shop

And bought sticks of red-and-white sugar
candy.

It was a pleasant thing to see him,

Standing meekly before the custom-house,
Sucking a sugar-stick,

And gazing at the dead funnels of
anchored steamers

Against a star-sprung sky.

I thought of him in an oval gilt frame
Against sprigged wall-paper,

Done in Fra Angelico pinks and blues
Of a clear and sprightly elegance.
Wherefore, being convinced of his value
as ornament,
I have set him on paper for the delecta-
tion
Of sundry scattered persons
Who consider such things important.

EASEL PICTURE

DECORATION DAY

She is a washerwoman most of the time,
But to-day she is a widow.
Important distinction which warrants a
plaintive manner
And her best black bombazine.
To be sure, she is only a plain widow,
And her husband was a drunkard who
ill-treated her,
But she never forgets that it is owing to
him that she ranks third in the cemetery,
Next to the war-widows and gold-starred
mothers.
She regrets that he did not enlist
Instead of lying about his age and dying
coldly of pneumonia,
Until she reflects that he might have re-
turned from overseas and beaten her
according to custom.
The thought purges her of envy, and she
sprinkles woe-begone, contented tears
On the bell-glass of artificial flowers she
lays on his grave;
It is a beautiful offering and has been
much admired.
With a blissful sense of bereavement, she
bows her head over the bell-glass,
Then rises to totter to the gate on the
arm of a friend who has offered to give
her a lift home.
In her attic room, she carefully folds the
bombazine,
Whispering to herself: "It was a beautiful
Decoration Day."

THE IRONY OF DEATH

A FUNERAL

You were always so vigorous,
And your mind was as full of movement
as your body.
When you sprang over rocks and boulders,
Or pushed waist-high through the fern,

I used to envy your strength,
And your buoyant lightness.
You were a true pagan
And Nature was your God.
You had no use for other gods,
And said so.
The day before you died you said so,
And you died bravely as you had lived,
With the farewell of a staunch comrade
upon your lips.

I went to the funeral which they gave
you.
No other of your real friends was there,
This was not the manner in which they
were used to meet you.
The room was crowded with your hus-
band's colleagues and their wives,
And people who had come for the sake
of appearances.
We were shut in the stifling room,
With the scent of the flowers on your
coffin.
A clergyman read the funeral service
Which you despised,
And the flowers wilted in the hot air.
Then I knew that you were dead
And I was glad,
For you would have wept to see how your
foolish husband exposed his soul
In his endeavour to give you a proper
funeral.

THE GRAVE

I left the horse outside,
For there were no roads in the little
graveyard,
No paths,
Only a disorder of gravestones,
And moss, and ragged grass,
And broken twigs fallen from the trees
overhead.
The ground was hummocked and hol-
lowed
Between the gravestones,
And I stumbled among them
Reading the inscriptions
To guide me.
Your monument was to be designed by
a great architect
They had told me,
But not yet, although you had been dead
four months.
Such things require consideration.

So I went from stone to stone,
 Seeking the child's grave
 Near which they had laid you.
 Suddenly I tripped,
 And jerking forward to save myself
 On the uneven ground,
 I saw in front of me two fruit jars
 Leaning crookedly against each other,
 And half-full of water foul to the colour
 of tobacco juice.
 They were smeared with the splashings of
 rain,
 And the rims of the covers were red with
 rust;
 In one a leaf was still clinging to a dying
 stalk,
 In the other the stalk was quite dead.
 Above them a tablet to a dead child
 Was let into a rock.

THE MIRROR

Opaque because of the run mercury at its
 back,
 White with a breath of yellow, like tar-
 nished silver,
 The old mirror hangs over the chimney-
 piece
 Incased in its carved frame, and reflects
 the room beneath.
 It is warped and bulging, because of the
 great fires
 Of other years; and dim with the sun
 shining in it every Spring.
 Old men and children move before it,
 and it reflects them all,
 Pulling them this way and that in its
 uneven surface.
 The pictures pass over it like mist over
 a morning window,
 And it hangs in its carved frame, tar-
 nished and beautiful,
 And reflects everything.

PORTRAIT OF AN ORCHESTRA LEADER

A young man on a platform?
 A white flame upreared in a silver dish,
 Swaying to the wind of horns and oboes,
 Bending to the undulate waves of violins.
 Do you think you see a young man in a
 swallow-tailed coat leading an orchestra?
 I tell you it is a white, pointed flame in
 a silver dish.

PORTRAIT

(E.R.B.)

This lady is like a grass-blade sheathed in
 ice,
 Like hoar-frost running along the borders
 of a formal garden.
 She is like violets under the misted glass
 of a cold frame
 On an Autumn morning with the sun
 scarcely above the trees.

The air has a smart twinge to it, I think,
 And the asters are black and broken;
 But what can equal the glitter of the
 frosty grass-blades,
 Held to a rigid radiance,
 Bent and motionless,
 Answering nothing to the wind?
 No, do not lift the frames.
 The violets are a lovely touch of colour,
 And I would rather forego the scent of
 them
 Than run the risk of their freezing.

MAGNOLIA GARDENS

CHARLESTON, S. C.

It was a disappointment,
 For I do not like magenta,
 And the garden was a fire of magenta
 Exploding like a bomb into the light-
 coloured peace of a Spring afternoon.
 Not wistaria dropping through Spanish
 moss,
 Not cherokees sprinkling the tops of trees
 with moon-shaped stars,
 Not the little pricked-out blooms of
 banksia roses,
 Could quench the flare of raw magenta.
 Rubens women shaking the fatness of
 their bodies
 In an opulent egotism
 Till the curves and colours of flesh
 Are nauseous to the sight,
 So this magenta.
 Hateful,
 Reeking with sensuality,
 Bestial, obscene —
 I remember you as something to be for-
 gotten.
 But I cherish the smooth sweep of the
 colourless river,
 And the thin, clear song of the red-
 winged blackbirds
 In the marsh-grasses on the opposite bank.

A SOUTH CAROLINA FOREST

Hush, hush, these woods are thick with
 shapes and voices,
 They crowd behind, in front,
 Scarcely can one's wheels break through
 them.
 For God's sake, drive quickly!
 There are butchered victims behind those
 trees,
 And what you say is moss I know is the
 dead hair of hanged men.
 Drive faster, faster.
 The hair will catch in our wheels and
 clog them;
 We are thrown from side to side by the
 dead bodies in the road,
 Do you not smell the reek of them,
 And see the jaundiced film that hides
 the stars?
 Stand on the accelerator. I would rather
 be bumped to a jelly
 Than caught by clutching hands I can-
 not see,
 Than be stifled by the press of mouths
 I cannot feel.
 Not in the light glare, you fool, but on
 either side of it.
 Curse these swift, running trees,
 Hurl them aside, leap them, crush them
 down,
 Say prayers if you like,
 Do anything to drown the screaming
 silence of this forest,
 To hide the spinning shapes that jam the
 trees.
 What mystic adventure is this
 In which you have engulfed me?
 What no-world have you shot us into?
 What Dante dream without a farther
 edge?
 Fright kills, they say, and I believe it.
 If you would not have murder on your
 conscience,
 For Heaven's sake, get on!

CIRCUS TENTS BY
LAKE MICHIGAN

I looked from my window at the great
 lake,
 And Shakespeare, and Keats, and Whit-
 man stood beside my chair
 And pointed out to me things I might not
 have seen.

They bade me observe the feather lights
 lying upon the lake surface,
 The blue enlarging upon a greater blue
 of the flat, approaching water,
 The crispness of its line against the shore.
 But the trains ran beneath my window,
 puffing and grinding,
 And from the circus tents beyond the
 railroad tracks
 Came the incessant, teasing bleat of the
 heard notes of a brass band.
 "Mr. Shakespeare," I urged, "be so kind
 as to repeat what you just said,
 I did not quite hear it.
 And, Mr. Keats, say that once again, if
 you please, I wish to lose nothing."
 Only Walt Whitman kept on speaking,
 Rolling out words which swept through
 the noise like a heavy moon through
 clouds,
 And his stretched arm pointed to the
 lake, cutting the tent in two, blotting
 out the middle flag.

So it went on all day,
 And the poets withdrew, baffled,
 And the circus tent swelled to a prodigious
 size and hung before me as all America.
 And the sorrow of jungle animals wasting
 themselves upon sawdust entered my
 heart,
 And the glory and grief of the trapeze
 artists and their useless perfection
 Rased my nerves with the prick of hail.
 So it was all day.
 And all day I watched and saw my country
 swallowed up by the huge tent,
 Far from trees, sweltering in a hot dust,
 Crying its delight cheaply and violently
 through the voices of peanut-men and
 clowns.

Night came, and the band droned on and
 bright lights glared in the tents.
 I had ceased to think. I stared out of
 the window and beat time to the band
 on the arm of my chair.
 Beyond the tent, the great lake crouched
 in darkness, waiting.
 I thought it waited to say a word to the
 caged, jungle animals,
 To the trapeze artists who had cheated
 death another day.
 I too waited until the tent lights went
 out,

And the lighthouses shone, red and white,
 in even pulsations,
 Half-way up my black window.
 And Shakespeare, and Keats, and Whit-
 man came back and watched the turn-
 ing lights with me,
 Silently we watched them half-way up
 the window.
 Then an elephant trumpeted, dreaming
 of water and lush trees,
 And a jackal, forgetting his cage, howled
 to the smell of the creeping water,
 And I wrote a poem for the trapeze
 artists which they will never read,
 And showed it to my companions, who
 only nodded,
 For they were watching the turning light-
 house lanterns, revolving red and white
 — red and white — slowly, evenly, half-
 way up the window.

ST. LOUIS

JUNE

Flat,
 Flat,
 Long as sight
 Either way.
 An immense country,
 With a great river
 Steaming it full of moist, unbearable heat.
 The orchards are little quincunxes of
 Noah's Ark trees,
 The plows and horses are children's toys
 tracing amusingly shallow lines upon
 an illimitable surface.
 Great chunks of life to match the country,
 Great lungs to breathe this hot, wet air.
 But it is not mine.
 Mine is a land of hills
 Lying couchant in the angles of heraldic
 beasts
 About white villages.
 A land of singing elms and pine-trees.
 A restless up and down land
 Always mounting, dipping, slipping into
 a different contour,
 Where the roads turn every hundred yards
 or so,
 Where brooks rattle forgotten Indian
 names to tired farm-houses,
 And faint spires of old meeting-houses
 Flaunt their golden weather-cocks in a
 brave show of challenge at a sunset sky.

Here the heat stuffs down with the thick-
 ness of boiled feathers,
 The river runs in steam,
 There, lilacs are in bloom,
 Cool blue-purples, wine-reds, whites,
 Flying colour to quiet dooryards.
 Grown year on year to a suddenness of
 old perfection,
 Saying "Before! Before!" to each new
 Spring.
 Here is "Now."
 But "Before" is mine with the lilacs,
 With the white sea of everywhere,
 With the heraldic, story-telling lulls.

THE REVENGE

All night I read a little book,
 A very little book it was.
 It had a pretty, shimmering look
 Like silver threaded into gauze.

I read it till the windows turned
 Into blue ghosts which stared at me.
 The fire twittered as it burned.
 A dwarfish sneer perched on my knee.

Who was it put the poison there?
 Who has conceived this hellish thing —
 To lay a sightless, soundless snare
 Amid its lovely whispering?

So gently came the rush of rhymes,
 So lightly breathed the poison in —
 Who thinks of cinquecento crimes
 White hellebore on jessamine?

I took that little shy, sleek book
 And set a crimson match to it.
 It crinkled like a freshest brook,
 And flaked and vanished, bit by bit.

There was no book my hands could hold,
 No book my eyes could ever see,
 But round my head it ran, a bald
 Ironical phylactery.

I cannot read the book again,
 But there's no need, it scalds my head,
 A strip of livid, living pain
 I shall not lose till I am dead.

For hate is old as eagle peaks,
 And hate is new as sunrise gulls,
 And hate is ravening vulture beaks
 Descending on a plate of skulls.

Hate is a torch, hate is a spur,
Hate will accomplish my design:
The author's first biographer!
I pray, O Hate, that task be mine.

I shall not need to criticize
Nor look the subject up at all,
But simply turn round both my eyes
And gaze at my brain's inner wall.

There I shall see a fresco wreath
Of letters moulded of dried tears,
And annotated underneath
The things I've thought and thought for
years.

'Twill be a pleasant job, I think,
To crumble up those dusty tears,
And stir them thickly in my ink;
Hate paid at last his long arrears.

My foot-notes will enrich the brew
With colours I've brought back from Hell.
I'll write down all I every knew.
By Satan's ears, I'll write it well!

By Satan's tongue! I'll tell the truth,
And not one word will add to it,
From his egregious, twisted youth
To his last frozen torture fit.

I'll write down his biography
So that the world will die of laughter.
I'll pin him like a squirming fly,
A comic spasm of hereafter.

I'll make his sins a jig of mirth,
His loves so many masterpieces
Of high derision. I will dig
Bare the cold roots of his caprices.

I'll sling about him every soul
He squeezed and drained to give him
drink.
His wife gone mad — I'll make it droll.
Bless the Hell colours in my ink!

I'll leave him not a decent rag
Of tragedy to wrap about him.
I'll hang him up as a red flag
Till every street boy learns to shout him.

I've taken up a pretty whim,
But tit for tat, he had his chance.

And I may end by blessing him,
My partner in this ghoulish dance.

He slew me for a time, admitted;
But I shall slay him for all time.
Poor shrivelled clown whom I've out-
witted,
I pardon you your poisoned rhyme.

Go peacefully, for I have done
With you and your false book is dead.
There's sorrow, too, in having won.
Go softly then, and go well sped.

CHILL

I thought of myself as a walnut
Hung above fallen leaves,
Desperately clinging and jerking
At the edge of a hollow wind.

I counted the leaves below me,
Scuffling and grating together.
I feared lest my withered stem
Should drop me too soon upon them.

The hollow wind played music,
Running over the branches.
The sapless chords of the branches
Whined a shrunken, glimmering tune.

The moon with a hump-backed shoulder
Shook a cloud off as though it were water,
And her light dripped down like water
Over the crackling leaves.

And shadows rose from the tree-trunks,
Cocking their legs and their ankles,
Dancing a dance of snapped elbows,
Distorting the beds of the leaves.

The owls flew shrieking above them,
Field-mice, their long tails twisted,
Ran like an army of ants
Gnawing and nudging each other.

And the wind played cymbals and tubas
To the beat of a tarantella,
Rocking in broken circles,
Chaining the tops of the tree.

And I was the kettle-drum tapping,
Tap-tapping my shell on the branch,
Terribly pulled and contorted,
Fearing the dance of the shadows.

Then there came to me the vision of a
 hepatica
 Standing thinly out of a mould of Winter
 leaves,
 Star-white, calling Good-morning to a
 soft sky.
 Gently swayed the white hepatica,
 Drinking the wet mould.
 I felt the roots streaming through it,
 I felt the moisture rising into the white
 petals.
 I saw the sun reach down and answer
 the bright hepatica.

I loosened my stem and fell — fell —
 Into blackness,
 For the cloud had re-captured the moon.

SNOW

It snowed yesterday,
 And to-day I have been choked with the
 pale falling of snow.
 It drops steadily,
 Slowly,
 Sliding in slant lines of white
 Against green trees.
 The trees burn through it
 Like slabs of green water
 Beneath the foam of a waterfall.
 The trees are permanent and still,
 The snow is permanent also,
 Light as dust,
 Grim as the heave of massed water,
 Continuous as the beat of death.
 A snow-flake on a path,
 A foot treads upon it and it is gone.
 Millions by millions of snow-flakes
 And a hundred thousand people
 Struggle under a smooth, smothering
 desolation.

In a bitter white twilight
 The snow creeps upon the city,
 Coming gently,
 Little crystals of no account
 Dropping down between solid houses,
 The warm streets melt it,
 But soon their power fails,
 The roadways disappear,
 The sidewalks sink and fade,
 From doorway to opposite doorway
 Lies a prairie of sudden snow.
 My rhododendron bushes
 Are single leaves gasping for air.
 My windows are dull eyes

Gazing at a crushed heaven.
 The wind flings rattles of sneering
 laughter
 Down the chimneys.
 Once there was a sun;
 I saw it weeks ago
 Commanding a blue sky,
 Driving the hours before it in a coloured,
 satisfactory procession.
 Now there is no sky,
 Merely a descending of grey particles,
 Ordered, open,
 A sequence of irony
 Deftly possessing itself of the world.
 Long ago,
 On nights like this,
 Wolves howled among these trees;
 Now there is silence,
 And the sibilant sifting murmur of the
 snow.
 But I expect to hear the wolves,
 I expect the house-roof to crumble
 And leave me pushing against white
 drifts,
 Chattering nonsense with a parched
 tongue,
 Gone mad with whiteness,
 Drowned under the feathers of the snow.
 There used to be sleigh-bells,
 Little shaken sprays of music,
 To make the snow human.
 Strong, friendly horses
 Trampling the storm with living sinews.
 Now —
 It slips,
 Slips,
 Cool,
 Still,
 Fragile and irrefragable,
 And I see it falling on a dead continent
 Where there is no more life,
 No more desire,
 Only the windless cold of an old planet
 Voyaging a perpetuity of stars.

OLD SNOW

The earth is iron,
 The winds are bands of steel,
 The snow is a pock-marked beggar-
 woman
 Crouching at a street corner
 Whining an old misery over and over.
 They say she was white once, and a
 virgin.

But who remembers it —
 Seeing her lie indecently huddled upon
 an iron earth,
 Cringing under the strokes of the steel-
 band wind?

NEW HEAVENS FOR OLD

I am useless.
 What I do is nothing,
 What I think has no savour.
 There is an almanac between the win-
 dows:
 It is of the year when I was born.

My fellows call to me to join them,
 They shout for me,
 Passing the house in a great wind of
 vermilion banners.
 They are fresh and fulminant,
 They are indecent and strut with the
 thought of it,
 They laugh, and curse, and brawl,
 And cheer a holocaust of "Who comes
 firsts!" at the iron fronts of the houses
 at the two edges of the street.
 Young men with naked hearts jeering be-
 tween iron house-fronts,
 Young men with naked bodies beneath
 their clothes
 Passionately conscious of them,
 Ready to strip off their clothes,
 Ready to strip off their customs, their
 usual routine,
 Clamouring for the rawness of life,
 In love with appetite,
 Proclaiming it as a creed,
 Worshipping youth,
 Worshipping themselves.
 They call for women and the women
 come,
 They bare the whiteness of their lusts
 to the dead gaze of the old house-
 fronts,
 They roar down the street like flame,
 They explode upon the dead houses like
 new, sharp fire.

But I —
 I arrange three roses in a Chinese vase:
 A pink one,
 A red one,
 A yellow one.
 I fuss over their arrangement.
 Then I sit in a South window

And sip pale wine with a touch of hem-
 lock in it,
 And think of Winter nights,
 And field-mice crossing and re-crossing
 The spot which will be my grave.

THE SIBYL

She was an aggressively unattractive old
 woman,
 Sitting there behind the table in the hotel
 corridor.
 Nothing could make her interesting or
 pathetic,
 Although to be on duty at midnight
 Proved her lot unfortunate.
 From her topknot of grey, escaping,
 withered hair
 To her fat, delaying hands,
 She precluded pathos;
 Even her melancholy attempt at finery,
 A faded imitation coral necklace,
 Seemed only dirty and dull.
 Hers was a hard lot indeed,
 Yet I could not pity her.
 I asked for a pencil.
 She gave me one, and grudged the doing
 it heartily.
 When I reached my room, I found that
 the pencil had a rubber on the end.
 Cursed old sibyl!
 What do you mean by uttering proph-
 ecies
 At midnight,
 In a hotel corridor!

THE MADMAN

My house burnt down, I saw the stars
 Where a dull ceiling once had been.
 The smoky rafters stood like bars
 With glittering planets in between.

My neighbours came and saved the shell
 Of my burnt house. I took no heed.
 They called to me that all was well.
 I strid a rafter like a steed.

My neighbours stamped the flower beds,
 Imploring me to clamber down.
 And all the time above their heads
 The steady stars were like a crown.

I chirruped to my rafter horse
 That he might flee across the sky,

Galloping in a planet's course
As I directed. Who was I?

I heard the shouts shot up at me,
I heard the cry: "The man's a fool!"
The rafter leapt amazingly
Among the stars. The air was cool.

The stars ran swiftly past my ear.
Chirping and chuckling, so they came.
They whispered to me not to fear.
I did not fear, the stars were tame.

They fawned and licked my hands and
feet,
I rode enwound in fondling stars.
They grouped themselves to make a
street,
And Venus flew with me, and Mars.

Jupiter strode along ahead
To push the crowding stars aside,
And Mercury, with fluttering tread,
Held back the rear that I might ride.

Now who would own a house of wood,
Of clay, or even morticed stone?
A hundred years I might have stood
Under the ceilings hanging prone.

"Blest fire!" I thought, and dug my heels
Into the rafter. On it slid.
The stars were road-dust blown from
wheels
Behind my flight. I reached the lid.

There was the cover of the sky.
I cried out to my rafter, "Stop!"
It heeded not at all, and I
Came bump against the awful top.

The shock deprived me of my breath
And shuttlecocking down I went.
A palsied thought that this was death
Scattered my senses and I bent.

All huddled up upon my steed
I clung, but with a swoop the rafter
Dropped through my legs which could
not speed
So fast. I fell alone thereafter.

I fell and fell again. I fell
For years and years. It was so dark

I only knew the door of Hell
Because it glowed with a red spark.

The stars had gone, the years had gone,
A memory was all I had.
I sat in a burnt dusk alone
And heard a voice say, "He is mad!"

Perhaps, thought I, it may be so,
But it's a poor man who'll not pay
For pleasures had when pleasure, go.
Thank Fortune, I'm not made that way.

They brought a wife and child to me
And called them mine. The silly dolts!
I turned my back upon their plea.
They put me behind bars and bolts.

I did not care a tinker's damn
For this or that. For I am he
Who rode with stars, that's what I am,
And will be to Eternity.

I've sold my life for one short night
And it was worth the payment due.
A man has certainly a right
To do as he desires to do.

They tell me 'twas my wife and child
Who owned my life. But these are
names
I've never heard before. Who build
Such flimsy lies can make no claims.

Fiddlesticks! fellows. Leave me be;
Here or elsewhere, it matters not.
Blinded by stars, I cannot see.
A memory is all I've got.

Leave me alone to dree my weird.
It always comes, the paying day.
And I remember I once steered
A rafter through a milky way.

DIRGE

I left her there in the rushes by the river,
Where the aspen leaves make a quiver—
quiver—quiver—
And the breeze through the trees casts a
silver shiver.

I left her floating there.
She swore to die and I left her dead
For what I answered to what she said.

Was there anything I could have done
instead?

Oh, the bitter, bitter beauty of her
hair!

For days I had heard the call of the
town.

But there was no need for her to drown.
Oh, the bubbles that came up as she
went down,

And the creak of the displaced reeds!
Snakes of hair-strands mounting through
the green,

Nosing past the reed-stems, catching in
between,

And a pallid shadow like a sunken tam-
bourine.

Was it she I saw in the weeds?

My boat drew out and drifted away,
What was the need for me to stay?
A drowned body is but water-logged clay.

I must pull for the night comes on.
But the water spurns the oars off as
though it were ice,

The boat is held as if wedged in a vice.

A gull cries once, a gull cries twice,
And a fog conceals the sun.

Red water-snakes with glimmering eyes
And bells on their tails, I see them rise
Here, there, everywhere. A swart crow
flies

Croaking toward the shore
And fastened to the snakes are pale
strange things

With waving, weaving tentacles like
arms, and rings

Clinging tight and tidily to misty pen-
cillings.

I have seen those rings before.

Not one face, alone, nor two, nor three,
But faces as many as the shells in the sea,
Their lank jaws trailing beside them
crookedly.

The river sighs and moans.
The tossing snakes are the hideous hair
Sprung from these heads. And the white
eyes glare

At my boat stuck still in a musty air
Jolted by the clatter of bones.

It's a lie! A lie! She wished to die,
Could any one have stopped her? There
was no time to try.

But the whimpering air seems to jelly.

My heart-beats slow and fail.

The bells on the snakes shrill an angelus,
The oily sky drips its yellow pus
Through the twilight — and I? You see
me thus.

A murderer locked in jail.

But all of every night and all of every day
I see her body with the rushes sway,
And the needles of the sun in the dis-
array

Of her glorious, undulant hair.

Her face smiles at me through the cool,
calm green

Of the water pool like a Florentine
Image set in lilies, but the lilies intervene.
I cannot reach her there.

Farewell, loveliest, azure-lidded, parted
By your misunderstanding and my wrath.

Ah, eager-hearted,

Proned to take offence at jests scarcely
even started,

There you lie with hope.

Both lost together at a single turn.

Water soaks your eyes and brain, mine
only burn.

Jailer put the clock on, upset the urn,
Be pitiful and hurry with the rope.

ANECDOTE

FIRST SOLILOQUY

Her breasts were small, upright, virginal;
Even through her clothes I could feel the
nipples pointing upward when I
touched her inadvertently.

The chastity of her garments was pro-
nounced,

But no disposal of material could keep
the shape of her breasts unseen.

And you would walk as a Spring wind,
You would order your demeanour as
though there were still frost in the air,
You would keep me to my distance by
the cool agreeableness of your speech.
You are foolish, Madam, or deceived.
Is it possible you underrate my sensibility
And do not realize that I hold your
breasts

In the hollow of my hand?

SECOND SOLILOQUY

His voice was a dagger tipped with honey,
His touch a scimitar dripping myrrh and gall.
He parted me from myself
And I stood alone in sunshine and trembled.
I caught my garments about me,
But they withered one by one as leaves wither, and fell.
I was alone in the wide sunlight;
His eyes were winds which would not leave me.
I would have sought a tree,
But the place where I was was bare and light.
Merciless light he shed upon me,
And I stretched my arms in shame and rejoicing.
Why do you stand there watching me?
Are you blind to what is really happening
That you talk so lightly of trifles?
Stop talking, you suffocate me.
Does any one notice?
Why do you strip me before all these people—
You, who care nothing for my nakedness?
Unbearable the anguish of my body,
The ache of my breasts,
The strain of covering myself is choking me.
Why do you do nothing but talk?
Have you no hands, no heart,
Or are you so cynical that you expose me for a whim?
Oh, I am well-trained, be sure of that,
But can you not see through my pretense?
It is agony to hold myself away from you,
Yet you are as impassive as a stone
Hermes before whom Venus herself would need no cloak.
Now that you are gone, what have you left me?
No privacy at all, I think.
You have stolen my secrecy, and flung it back as something not worth taking.
I have only the harsh memory of your eyes.
Your dull, stone eyes which haunt me in the dark.

EPITHALAMIUM IN THE MODERN MANNER

The round, red moon ran a level eye along the hayfield,
Appraising conditions with a view to possibilities.
It was the moon's business to see that the shadows of the cocks were of sufficient size,
As a preliminary to the seasonable arrival of the next generation.

"To one enamoured of dragonflies,
What is a chip hat with a ribbon round it?
To one engrossed in a game of cribbage,
What is the importance of the "Treaty of Ghent?"
Which shows that Archibald was in a naughty humour,
And Joanna more than usually occupied with the counting of grass-blades.
The moon caught them in her long orange arms
And jostled them together with so thorough a completeness
That they fell, giggling, into a haystack shadow.
As perfect a pair of young animals as need be
For the maintenance of the species man on an ant-corroded planet.

POINTS OF VIEW

Youth cocks his hat and rides up the street.
Age cocks his eye only to see it.

Youth puts his horse at a five-barred gate.
Age chuckles grimly and sits down to wait.

Youth limps by with a broken-kneed horse.
Age, through the shutters, mutters "Of course!"

Youth curses Fate for his splitting head.
Age lights the candle and hobbles to bed.

SHOOTING THE SUN

Four horizons cozen me
 To distances I dimly see.
 Four paths beckon me to stray,
 Each a bold and separate way.
 Monday morning shows the East
 Satisfying as a feast.
 Tuesday I will none of it,
 West alone holds benefit.
 Later in the week 'tis due
 North that I would hurry to.
 While on other days I find
 To the South content of mind.
 So I start, but never rest
 North or South or East or West.
 Each horizon has its claim
 Solace to a different aim.
 Four-soul'd like the wind am I,
 Voyaging an endless sky,
 Undergoing destiny.

THE CUSTOMER

She came into my shop to-day,
 The old maid from across the way,
 With her pursed-up lips and disdainful
 mien
 And her walk, each step with another be-
 tween.

Her mouth drew up above her nose,
 No wrinkles ever so sniffed as those.
 Her dress was too long, too short, too
 square,
 Each inch measured out with what
 should be there.

Her hair, a twisted wad of grey,
 Tipped her hat in the strangest way
 So that every angle hurt like a noise,
 There was discord in its very poise.

Her eyeglass crystals made her eyes
 Puff out to a prodigious size:
 The opaque white of eggs much cooked
 Shone dully everywhere she looked.

She minced up to the counter, said:
 "I want three yards of ribbon — red."
 Sat down upon a stool and waited.
 The tranquil atmosphere vibrated.

I bowed and brought a brilliant red,
 Flaming and smooth as though each
 thread

Were new-run blood or molten glass.
 She gave one look and let it pass.

I brought her scarlet, a poppy shade
 Hot as a subaltern's cockade,
 It darted out between my hands
 Like a spurted flame of many strands.

She shook her head and murmured,
 "Crude."
 I brought her a damask whose lassitude
 Was of pale boudoirs and midday wak-
 ings;
 It slid from the roll in languid snakings.

Annoyed, she pushed it to one side.
 A clear carnation next I tried,
 Fresh as Spring wind. "Oh, no," said
 she,
 And tapped her foot impatiently.

I urged a cardinal crimson — she pouted.
 Magenta, vermilion — both were flouted.
 Carbuncle, ruby, cinnabar,
 The counter looked like a mad bazaar.

One was too dull, the next too gay,
 The next she fingered and turned away.
 I tried thin ribbons of madder and lake,
 Or wide russet sashes I hoped she would
 take.

I offered maroon with intriguing bright-
 nesses,
 I tendered a cherry streaked with white-
 nesses.
 I gave her the claret of evening skies,
 The silver-salmon of faint sunrise.

I brought down carmine doubled with
 gold.
 I found pale buffs under which rolled
 A faint suggestion of watchet or blue.
 Nothing I showed her seemed to do.

I gave her plaid ribbons, chequered, shot.
 Always she asked what more I had got.
 I proffered striped satins, or grosgrain
 plain.
 Whatever it was, I must try again.

The uncoiled ribbons grew and grew
 Until I only saw her through

A hole in the pile. But her voice came clear:

"I have you no more, there is nothing here."

I climbed down ladders with boxes balanced

In either hand. Under the valanced
Counters I dove for still more bolts.
She pronounced all ribbon designers dolts.

Neither colour, nor texture, nor price
would suit,
She must see more. So to the root
Of my stock I went, unwinding, displaying—

Her chilly voice simply went on saying

That all was wrong, one way or another.
I began to wonder if I should smother
Under those rubicund twining strips,
When wanly fell from the pursed-up lips:

"You have so little to choose from here,
And what you have so excessively dear,
I will take two packets of pins. Nothing
more."
And paying me she tripped through the
door.

The sun was setting, the ribbons looked
dull,
The heap had assumed the form of a
skull.
The hollow eyes winked, the loose jaw
made
A grimace at the fool who sold beauty
in trade.

The wind whispered under the shop-door
sill,
"Loveliness! Loveliness! Where you will.
Make it, give it, but put it on sale,
A bale of goods is only a bale."

The primrose moon through the window-
pane
Misted the skull with saffron rain.
Gold as a guinea it lured and shone
At the tradesman standing there alone.
From the old clock tower of carven stone
The hour chimed in a hollow tone,
Three peals of bells for a quarter past
one.

THE SEWING-BOOK

I've been reading a book about sewing,
And I look at my useless hands,
They know nothing at all of a needle's
going
Over and under through linen strands.

My hands are a foolish sort of toys,
They can hold a pencil, that is all they
know.

Now, reading, they would aspire to the
joys
Of setting a thousand little stitches in a
row.

A row of neat little stitches in some particularly fine cloth.

Cloth is perhaps sweeter than its grand-child—paper.

But these clumsy hands of mine are worth

Whatever value there is in a sky-scraper
Hewn of cold clouds, ainly morticed with
grey vapour.

Nainsooks, linen-lawns and cambrics,
Even mercerized cotton has an agreeable
style

In reading. My hands build towers of
flame-bricks,

But I burn in their fire all the while.

Embroidering monograms is a cool pursuit, and stitching

A monotonous thing like a hem means rest

I can quite believe, rest uninterrupted by
the itching

Torment to mold a weather-cock of fire
into a crest.

Is a needle sharper than a pencil? That
Hinges of course on this matter of hands.
A cardinal may be weighed down by his
hat,

And a pencil weary for the smooth, white
bands

Of a linen cuff, perchance. There it
stands.

Two or three spools of coloured thread,
And whatever flower comes into your
head

Blooms on the muslin tranquilly,

Evenly patterned as a tree.
 I consume with a pencil's lead,
 Making a thought, a grief, a laughter.
 You will last while fibres hold fibres. I,
 dead,
 Tempt a future of nothing and nothing.
 No daffers
 Aim in the world than that what I have
 said
 May be seeded, harvested, ground into
 bread
 And so on hereafter, and that to be
 Till the hungry find nothing to eat in me,
 And no fit dwelling in my smouldering
 towers
 Only the crumbling of mouldy hours.
 Oh, the peace, the peace of your silken
 flowers!
 The smooth, white dust of your exquisite,
 faded flowers!

STILL LIFE

MOONLIGHT STRIKING UPON A
CHESS-BOARD

I am so aching to write
 That I could make a song out of a chess-
 board
 And rhyme the intrigues of knights and
 bishops
 And the hollow fate of a checkmated
 king.
 I might have been a queen, but I lack
 the proper century;
 I might have been a poet, but where is
 the adventure to explode me into
 flame.
 Cousin Moon, our kinship is curiously
 demonstrated,
 For I, too, am a bright, cold corpse
 Perpetually circling above a living world.

BALLAD OF GRINNING DEATH

Upon a decent truckle-bed
 A woman lay, and she was dead.
 A curtain flapped before a pane
 Of glass made sharp and thick by rain.
 A mouse ran softly on the floor.
 Beyond the rattling attic door,
 A wind was moaning more and more,
 It wailed as waves against a shore.

A candle with a drowning wick
 Swaled in an old tin candlestick.

A haggard man was writing there,
 Composing words with dreadful care.
 He ran his fingers through his hair,
 And sang a song which cut a glare
 Like purple lightning through the gloom
 Of that wind-muffled, quiet room.

He sang: "Come, comrades, drink it up,
 The bubbling, beading, blazing cup,
 The licking, glittering serpent wine,
 Drink, Bully Boys, the candles shine,
 Women, and lights — " The strained
 voice cracked
 Upon a chilly sob which hacked
 The melody to bits, and left
 Only a poor old man bereft.

He rose and wavered through the room,
 His fingers struck upon the doom
 Of Death and rang a hollow sound
 As pulses beating round and round,
 All round and round, but in that place
 Where lay her tired, peaceful face,
 He knelt as in a neutral space.

He kissed the glassy hands, a moan
 Wrenched from him by their feel of
 stone;
 He passed his arms about the thin
 Old shrunken form and held it in
 His shivering grasp, and called her name,
 And told her it was he who came;
 He babbled love words, beating them
 Harshly against Death's frozen phlegm.

The rain struck loud upon the sash.
 Over the roof, the rain-drops' dash
 Drew thickly to a single fall
 Of water leaping down a wall.
 He must not pause, he could not wait,
 The hour was growing very late.
 The money for the funeral.
 He crept back to his blotted scrawl.

And there all night he wept and tore
 Out of his bleeding mind a score
 Of rousing drinking-songs, that rang
 In obscene choruses, a clang
 Of goblets clattered through the staves,
 And on he wrote as one who raves:
 "Drink, Men, for wine is crowning
 sweet" —
 He dropped his head upon the sheet,
 He clutched his hands until the bones
 Stood out upon the skin like stones,

And cursed God as a frantic child
Screams at a dream. Then, weak and
mild,

He pleaded: "Do not leave me, Dear.
Oh, Mary, Mary, can you hear?"
The silence hissed upon his ear.

Then he would jerk upright and sing:
"A ring-a-ding, a ring-a-ding.
For brandy is a handsome thing.
Ale is for toppers who have to be careful,
Claret for gentlemen grown somewhat
fearful.

Sherry for men with a long roll of
yellows,
But brandy and rum for the best of good
fellows.

Hol Boys! Drinking boys,
Clap your glasses and make a noise,
Shouting brandy and rum, Hol Hol! Hol
Calling for whiskey and gin." Below
He heard the choking gutters spill,
The wind beyond the door was shrill,
The corpse beneath its sheet lay still.

To him this was not something dead,
He did not know her so. Instead
What lay there was his sleeping wife,
The hair-spring of his dredged-out life,
The reason why his dreams were good,
The springing freshness of his blood.
The edges of his life drew in
And hung about him, curled and thin,
He felt himself an empty shell
Swirled by a wind across a fell,
And Heaven was just a sneer of Hell.

A near-by steeple rang a chime,
For time is time, and passing time,
And wearily he found a rhyme
And nailed it to a loud-laughed jest.
He cursed the man at whose request
The drinking-songs were ordered. Then
He rose and came to her again,
And stood and stifled in his pain.

The near-by steeple chimed and tolled
That life was old and songs were gold,
And drinking-songs were red and sweet,
And morning crawling down the street.
He smoothed her quiet, quiet hair,
He pulled the curtain so no glare
Should be upon her anywhere,
Then took his songs and left her there.

Outside the wind blew sharp and strong.
A dwindled sunlight fled along
The endless streets. He ached for sleep,
His eyes were eyes which may not weep.
He had no thought about it all
But money for a funeral.
His brains were leaping in a fire
To gratify her last desire.
A hearse, a coffin, and a pall
To give her decent burial.
And then the snow began to fall.

POETIC JUSTICE

Double-flowering trees bear no fruit, they
say,
And I have many blossoms,
With petals shrewdly whirled about an
empty centre,
White as paper, falling at a whiff of wind.
But when they are gone
There are only green leaves to catch at
the sunlight,
Green monotonous leaves
Which hide nothing.

TO FRANCESCA BRAGGIOTTI

AFTER SEEING HER DANCE:
"FRAGRANCE"

White —
As the dawn on white roses.
Bright —
As sunlight on your rope of roses;
As a feather tossed in the quick of the
wind,
As a crystal figure swept by a rainbow
rain.
Dancer of silver shadows,
You are all youth and freshness,
Like a sharp spear against ivy,
Like a bow pulled to quivering,
Like an arrow rushed from a shaking bow.
Your arms are gestures of a morning
earth,
The arc of your leaping legs a shout of
loveliness,
Your movements the shining silence of
the on-coming sun.
You dance in the dawn,
You dance over green lawns in a leaf-
rhythm,
Weaving patterns with your rope of
roses,

Printing a white, fleeting pattern of
yourself,
Of your bright body against sudden,
startled green.

DANCE FIGURE

I would pray for thunder
Clanging across a copper sky.
For the scissors of the lightning
Rending green clouds.

As a tempest in the tree-tops,
I scream into the fiery wind;
As rain, wing-footed,
I fleet over dim valleys.

I am the silver of storm,
The gold of shuddering mist-tissues
Clouded about the head of that God
Whose name is fury to the world.

Speak, joints,
Wrists, ankles, knee-sockets!
Shout — arms, legs,
Shoulder-reaches and finger-tips!
Cry the song of an iron chariot
Rolling wheel and wheel
Along the wind tracks.

I leap in an angle of lightning.
I bend, spring, glitter,
Ripping the cloud-veils.
Who has seen the passion of my heart?
Are there eyes which can bear the sight
of me
Approaching in the darkness?

The black horses snort at my coming,
The trees fling the roses of their leaves
before me.

Sing —
While the leaves tear from the trees.
I leap from the heavens —
Shall you not behold me?

Daughter of thunder and the flake of it,
The deep pools wait for me,
I am the flash of a single body
Shivering to a million reflections.

As the thunder walks upon the sky
With steps of brass and ochre,
So I walk,
Upon a tower where no light is,

Slightly gauzed,
A moon whose clouds escape her.

You who desire me,
Where are you that I may reach you?
For whom am I come
If not for you?

Thunder of midnight,
Thunder of the morning,
I have made my waist supple for you.
I have taught my hands an unknown
cunning.
My legs are the pillars of a flowing sky.

Dance then,
You who are curved to receive me.
Fling a new shadow from my brightness.
I am as you would have me,
The breaker of moulds and medallions,
Fashioning all things to a heaviness of
thunder,
To a glory of unquenchable lightnings,
Whose image shall endure
To everlasting time.

Torch of thunder,
You burn upon the mountains,
And the lesser peaks
Fly up with flame.
Dazzling torch of aconite and silver,
Blaze — flare —
Penetrate the chasms of the great rocks,
The clefts in the mountain sides.
O radiant valleys,
Catch fire and sing with it in your
mouths!
Light is forever,
For the fire of the sky has no end.

Thunder-dancer,
I am tranquil,
Tranquil.
Slow drops drip from the trees,
Unevenly falling.
Slowly, with the slow rain-drops,
Dance,
And sleep.

JAZZ DANCE

How-do! How-do!
Pigeon-wing and toe.
Click your heels together

And away we go.
 Snappin' our fingers
 And slitherin' our feet,
 Beatin' out a sugar tune
 Sticky and sweet.
 Grab your lovely lady
 And whirl her off the floor,
 Slip and slide her down the room,
 Steer her up once more.
 Hear the drums a-beatin',
 But they're goin' awful slow.
 Hit her up, you jazz-men,
 We're sleepin' in this row.
 What's the bones a-doin'
 Blowin' on his thumbs?
 Sets my ribs a-jiggin'
 To hear them drums.
 How-do! How-do!
 Out there in the night
 All the birds am listenin'
 And quiverin' with fright.
 I reckon they 'low it's Judgment come
 Them rattles is makin' such a terrible
 hum.
 Don't you hear the sizzlin' out in the
 grass?
 It's snakes, Honey, snakes, all a-hustlin'
 to pass.
 They thinks we's devils, with the bawlin'
 and yellin',
 An' they've only got a minute to run
 away from Hell in.
 Watch me playin' possum,
 Slinkin' through the crowd.
 Peek past the folks, Lamb,
 Ain't yo' proud
 When I leap up sudden
 On a great round swing
 With the flicker-flap-flash
 Of a woodpecker's wing?
 'Pears like you
 Is a honeysuckle flower
 Smellin' like a bunch of 'em
 After a shower.
 'Pears like you
 Is a great gold queen
 Settin' on a high throne
 All red an' green.
 These here niggers
 Am just yo' people,
 But I am yo' fancy-man
 Tall as a steeple,
 With my head in the clouds
 Bobbin' roun' an' roun',
 An' my feet rejoicin'

At the boom-boom sound,
 Step along with me, Honey,
 What's the music for?
 Your little fire-feet am cracklin',
 Snappin' on the floor.
 They'm scorchin' my toes
 An' burnin' my eyes
 An' shootin' an' scoutin'
 Like they was fire-flies
 All a-razzle an' a-dazzle
 An' a whirigiggin' wonder,
 Mockin' the old jazz drums
 Poundin' there like thunder.
 Don't you keep me waitin',
 Ain't I achin' to begin,
 Itchin' for it, Lady Bird,
 Like it was a sin.
 Your wild-cat eyes is callin' me
 They'm clawin' at my face,
 I can't stand still no longer,
 Jump in an' take your place.
 Tickle up your shins, Girl,
 Look mighty smart.
 Grab me round the waist and — Whoop!
 There we start.
 How-do! How-do!
 Throw your little heels so,
 Same as colts do, that's the style.
 Double shuffle for a mile.
 Swing your hips and bend your head.
 Say, the music's all gone dead.
 Beat your drums up, player-men,
 Do that cake-walk reel again.
 Shake the tambourines a bit,
 Bang the cymbals till they split,
 Throw your drum-sticks up and catch
 'em.
 We can bunny-jump to match 'em.
 Whirl your rattles to a spin,
 Prod the fiddler with a pin,
 That ole nigger's pow'ful lazy,
 Makes us all go just plum crazy,
 Do you hear that shudderin' whine?
 There's an owl in the old pine.
 Guess he's lonesome all out there
 Nothin' roun' but just cold air.
 My! it's hot in here an' steamy.
 Makes my head go kind of creamy
 Seein' that great big flat moon
 Callivantin' roun' in tune
 Every time we pass the door.
 Shoot away now down the floor,
 Dizzy, whizzy, loo-for-Lizzie,
 Buckle-rappin', tap-tap tappin'.
 Guess my bones am gwine to loosen,

Guess I can't no more be choosin',
 Guess I'll dance till Kingdom come,
 Guess I need a drop of rum.
 Holy Moses! hold me tighter,
 'Pears the moon am growin' whiter.
 Drum, you niggers, skin yo' wrists,
 Ain't we done a heap o' twists!
 How-do! How-do!
 Heel and toe,
 Forty couples in a glow,
 Eight rose-bud hearts a-quakin'.
 Looks it might be dawn a-breakin'!
 How-do! How-do!
 Pigeon-heel and rabbit-toe,
 'Till the candles all burn low
 And the drums am tellin' sleepy
 'Tappin' ghostly-short an' creepy,
 An' a bluejay up an' screeches
 Outside in his purple beeches.
 Kiss me, Honey, that's all right.
 Maybe I'll be round to-night.

PROPER INVECTIVE

FOLLOWED BY AN ARIA OF IRONIC
 CONSEQUENCE

Rust, moth, fungus, canker-worm,
 Hemlock, nightshade, Upas tree,
 All the horrors that there be
 Loose upon this pachyderm.

Gods of grottoes, caves, and mountains,
 Oracles and visions dire,
 Spirits of the air and fire.
 Dryads, naiads, nymphs of fountains.

Leave your eagle crags and eyries,
 Fly your apple-leaved seclusions,
 Bring your dreadfulest confusions,
 Mumbled magic misercres.

Spell, and curse, and incantation
 Heap upon this froward man,
 Every charm and patteran
 Use to his complete damnation.

Call in wizards, witches, seers,
 With their lore of plant and planet,
 Bid them forge a charm of granite
 Lasting for a thousand years.

Bid them pick the square-stemmed briars
 Out of swamps where vapours ooze,
 Watch the faggots that they choose,
 Proper for their magic fires,

Watch them come by one and one,
 With the fog-web in their hair,
 And their yellow eyes astare,
 Bearing treasures hardly won.

Slowly tramping round about
 The red cauldron, in they drop
 Mince and morsel, sip and sop,
 Rabbit's paw or weasel's snout,

Snakeskin sloughed at middle moon,
 Hair of brindled, five-toed cat,
 Spotted burdock which a rat
 Cnawed where frosty gibbets croon.

Tail of skunk and owlet's ear,
 Earthworms digged from a Jew's grave,
 Splinter of a coffin stave
 Nicked from off a miser's bier.

Roots of adder's tongue, and yew
 Stripped at dawn on Easter even.
 "Seven, seven, seven, seven,
 Seven stars which buzzed and flew.

Seven devils, flying, dipping,
 Diving round the weather-cock
 Of the church, while tolls the clock
 Seven long strokes without skipping."

Infant's finger singed and brittle
 Stuck upon a dragon's fang,
 And, to give the brew a tang,
 Seven drops of blindman's spittle.

Rumble, rumble, stir the stew
 Round and round in widdershins,
 Faster, faster, till it spins.
 But there's more I'd have you do.

Summon Gods of Ind and Indies:
 Thoth, Sesostris, Voodoo, Bel,
 With their sorceries from Hell
 And their weird outlandish shindies.

Sibyls, with your erudition,
 Read him all the sooth and sin
 Under his name written in
 Your long records of perdition.

Ancient oracles declaim
 Fates concealed in dream and trance,
 Tragic jests of circumstance.
 Speak them smoothly like a flame.

Every rune and every rite
Shower on him, spare not one,
Till from sun to rising sun
Never lived a sadder wight.

Let the spinning shapes of mist
Lure him to high rocky edges
Over surfy seas, let sedges
Hide the river's sudden twist.

Urge him with the voice of lovers
Into fenny bogs and quakes
Where the tufted marsh-mud shakes
And a green light swoops and hovers.

Elves and pixies, pique him, prick him,
Knot the grass to trip his feet.
Goblin, djinn, and black afreet
Pommel, pound, confuse, and kick him.

Star his darkness thick with faces,
Mewing, mouthing, white as yeast;
Bloody lips on which ghouls feast
Leer at him with foul grimaces.

Beetles, bugs, and dragon-flies,
Sting him with your poisoned stings,
Crawling fogs fold your cold wings
Round about his arms and thighs.

Itching fevers, let him be
Your most constant bourn, attend him
With such pangs that they may send him
Forthright to Eternity.

.
So far done! O Warlocks, Witches,
Thanks. And Gods of cloud and moun-
tain,

And ye nymphs of tree and fountain,
Upland wold and leafy ditches,

I am gratitude unending.
Flit back to your woods and caverns,
Your high palaces, and taverns
Under junipers down bending.

I will lay you jars of wine
At the entrance to your grottoes,
I will carve the trees with mottoes:
Aspen, birch, and scowling pine.

Not a wind shall blow between them
But my words will show the brighter,

Cut through bark to wood that's whiter.
Everyone will soon have seen them.

Everyone will pilgrimage
To your mountains and your rills,
Trampling down the daffodils,
Hauling marble for a stage.

Column, court, and colonnade
Will appear by due degrees,
Overhung with locust-trees
Casting purple pools of shade.

Medals, coins, and carved gems
Will be dropped into your shallows,
Chequered by the brooding shallows
With their pink and silver stems.

Youths and maidens wreathed in crocus
Will parade your solemn larches,
Pruned and fashioned into arches
With the temple as their focus.

All because, you Ancient Spirits,
Sibyls, Oreads, and Elves.
Hoary Gods, you gave yourselves,
Each with his peculiar merits,

To avenge a mortal who
Had received a grievous slight
From a witty, witless wight.
Tell no one what I tell you.

Priests and Vestals shall not know
Why this temple stands to prove
My high gratitude and love,
Why I have proclaimed you so.

Listen then, to solemn truth,
In the arrogance of youth,
What that fellow dared to do:
Write a long, adverse review!

See now, in my rage and rancour,
Goaded by tormenting canker,
What I've done. It might be worse.
Founding creeds upon a curse
Is no new thing, you'll admit.
Take what is and build on it,
Be obliged with what you find,
Wisdom does not pry behind
Any curtain hung between
What is now with what has been.
If you do not wish to see
Your fine temple utterly

Doomed and ruined, never tell.
Gods and oracles, farewell.

DISSONANCE

From my window I can see the moon-
light stroking the smooth surface of
the river.

The trees are silent, there is no wind.
Admirable pre-Raphaelite landscape,
Lightly touched with ebony and silver.
I alone am out of keeping;
An angry red gash
Proclaiming the restlessness
Of an incongruous century.

THE BOOK OF STONES AND LILIES

I read a book
With a golden name,
Written in blood
On a leaf of flame.

And the words of the book
Were clothed in white,
With tiger colours
Making them bright.

The sweet words sang
Like an angel choir,
And their purple wings
Beat the air to fire.

Then I rose on my bed,
And attended my ear,
And the words sang carefully
So I could hear.

The dark night opened
Like a silver bell,
And I heard what it was
The words must tell:
"Heaven is good.
Evil is Hell."

The night shut up
Like a silver bell.
But the words still sang,
And I listened well.

I heard the tree-winds
Crouch and roar,
I saw green waves
On a stony shore.

I saw blue wings
In a beat of fire.
My hands clutched the feathers
Of all desire.

I cried for hammers,
For a hand of brass,
But my soul was hot
As melted glass.

Then the bright, bright words,
All clothed in white,
Stood in the circle of the silver night,
And sang:
"Energy is Eternal Delight.
Energy is the only life."

And my sinews were like bands of brass,
And the glass of my soul hardened and
shone
With all fires, and I sought the ripeness
of sacrifice
Across the dew and the gold of a young
day.

STALACTITE

I am a dead thing,
A brittle mummy swathed in canvas,
Gazing with cracked, painted eyes
At a high dome above a still hall.
There is thunder,
And I hear it;
There is lightning,
And I see the tongues of it;
There are many bodies beside mine,
And I see them too.
I died a thousand years ago,
And yet I remember long since,
Drifts of ages since,
Watching,
With other eyes than these,
Diana gathering white poppies upon a
seaside hill.

THE SPLENDOUR FALLS FROM CASTLE WALLS

(Adapted from Tennyson)

The windows of the gallery
Are tall, with rounded tops, so high
They cramp the ceiling. Through their
panes,
Fogged and streaked with dust and rains,

An August sunshine slants and veers
 Over the walls and the chandeliers
 Of faceted crystal, but scarce a gleam
 Can these give back, the ancient dream
 Of dust is on them. The sunlight floats
 On a stream of dust, the dropping motes
 Sift like mist through the empty room
 Filling it with a golden bloom.
 The moth-eaten velvet of the chairs
 Placed along the walls in pairs
 Is pitilessly obvious,
 The gilded arms and legs are worse,
 Scaled to the wood. All is hushed and
 bright,

An ancient splendour crushed with light,
 An aristocratic refinement, lying
 Bare to the eyes in the act of dying.
 Not a sound from the courtyard, not a
 bang

From a distant door. The pictures hang
 Undisturbed, the scenes they show
 All occurred so long ago
 They are nothing to nothing.
 But how fresh the paint
 Upon armoured hero and martyred saint.
 How steadily the pennants curl
 From the masts of battleships! How they
 whirl,

The javelins on that brazen gate!
 Here is passion coagulate,
 Stiffened at its highest flux,
 An agony not worth the chucks
 Of a copper-coin, or the bandolier
 Of a sixteenth century cavalier.
 What knots of roses these battles were
 To the painter commissioned to disinter
 A thousand graves and decorate
 One general at his moment of spate.
 How gaily and safely they plied their
 trade,

Turning a fight to a harlequinade,
 A holocaust to a pirouet.
 What of the blood, the groans, the sweat,
 The squeal of wounded horses, the
 cries

Of disembowelled companies —
 What, think you, becomes of these
 On his commissioned canvases?
 Blow the trumpet! Bang the drum!
 Tootle the fife! The armies come
 Home from the wars, and what did they
 Do there, painter, can you say?
 Of course he can, he's the man to tell
 What he's never seen, he imagines so
 well.

In his pictures, cavalry advance
 To the jaws of cannon, so sprightly a
 prance

Shows the rose-wreath courage of horses
 and men.

One cannon ball has just slain ten,
 Another is bursting like a rocket
 An inch beyond the embroidered pocket
 Of a gold-laced gentleman, unconcerned
 By the fact that his uniform may be
 burned.

His noble horse, on hind legs only,
 Dashes ahead of the troop in lonely
 Magnificence. Earthworks bar the way,
 But what of that? This is Malplaquet
 With Marlborough rampant. Hooray!
 Hooray!

I am almost inclined to toss my hat
 Up on a chandelier for that.
 Such a roseate riot of marshal exploit!
 A leader so bold, well-dressed, and adroit
 At high-school horsemanship, one of the
 true bits

Of earth's tempered metal; why even his
 cubits

Outspan those of any behind him that
 drew bits

And gave him his distance to open the
 breach

In fiery solitude. What do they teach?
 "Marlbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre!" Such
 is speech;

Even I am ignited.

A curious sound,
 Something between a step and a pound,
 Startles my trance. A man comes in,
 A pallid person, and so thin
 His bones crook the angles of his dress.
 He limps, poor soul, and his breathless-
 ness

Is pitiable, after his climb
 Up the slippery stairs. It is closing time
 He tells me dully. But I beg
 Him to sit and rest. His wooden leg
 Is a heavy burden, I suppose.
 He shakes his head and slowly goes
 On his round of closing the high win-
 dows.

"It's nothing, Sir, I've got the use
 Of this timber now. They cooked my
 goose

When they conscripted me. If I'd known
 In time I'd have broke my leg with a
 stone

Rather than this. I've a churlish bed

To lie on, but what's done is done," he said.

A miserable philosophy
To catch a man so young as he.
I risked a question gingerly.
"Yes, Sir, a wife and youngster, so
I got this job. It's all I can do.
Damn beastly business, war!" He spat
A curse or two, and after that
He moved to show me out, but when
I asked his age, he spat again
Another curse: "That's it, Sir, see,
I'm only just gone twenty-three."
I gave him silver. His stump came fainter
Round the corner of the kitchen wing.
Coincidence is an cery thing —
As I walked away, I damned that painter.

SONGS OF THE PUEBLO INDIANS

I

WOMEN'S HARVEST SONG

I am waving a ripe sunflower,
I am scattering sunflower pollen to the
four world-quarters.
I am joyful because of my melons,
I am joyful because of my beans,
I am joyful because of my squashes.

The sunflower waves.
So did the corn wave
When the wind blew against it,
So did my white corn bend
When the red lightning descended upon
it,

It trembled as the sunflower
When the rain beat down its leaves.

Great is a ripe sunflower,
And great was the sun above my corn-
fields.

His fingers lifted up the corn-ears,
His hands fashioned my melons,
And set my beans full in the pods.
Therefore my heart is happy
And I will lay many blue prayer-sticks at
the shrine of Ta-wa.

I will give corn to Ta-wa,
Yellow corn, blue corn, black corn.
I wave the sunflower,
The sunflower heavy with pollen.
I wave it,
I turn it,

I sing,
Because I am happy.

II

BASKET DANCE

Dance!
Dance!
The priest is yellow with sunflower meal,
He is yellow with corn-meal,
He is yellow as the sun.
Dance!
Dance!
His little bells are ringing,
The bells tinkle like sunlight,
The sun is rising.
Dance!
Dance!
Perhaps I will throw you a basket,
Perhaps I will throw you my heart.

Lift the baskets, dancing,
Lower the baskets, dancing,
We have raised fruits,
Now we dance.
Our shadows are long,
The sunlight is bright between our
shadows.
Do you want my basket?
Catch it!
Catch it!
But you cannot catch me,
I am more difficult.

III

WOMEN'S SONG OF THE CORN

How beautiful are the corn rows,
Stretching to the morning sun,
Stretching to the evening sun.
Very beautiful, the long rows of corn.

How beautiful is the white corn,
I husk it,
I grind it,
Very beautiful, my white corn.

How beautiful is the red corn,
I gather it and make fine meal,
I am glad doing this.
Very beautiful, my red corn.

How beautiful is the black corn,
I give it to my father,
To my mother,

I give it to my child.
Very beautiful, the black corn.

How beautiful is the mottled corn,
Like the sky with little clouds,
I eat it looking at the sky.
Very beautiful, my mottled corn.

IV

PRAYER FOR A PROFUSION OF SUNFLOWERS

Send sunflowers!
With my turkey-bone whistle
I am calling the birds
To sing upon the sunflowers.
For when the clouds hear them singing
They will come quickly,
And rain will fall upon our fields.
Send sunflowers!

V

PRAYER FOR LIGHTNING

My corn is green with red tassels,
I am praying to the lightning to ripen
my corn,
I am praying to the thunder which carries
the lightning.
Corn is sweet where lightning has fallen.
I pray to the six-coloured clouds.

VI

FLUTE-PRIEST SONG FOR RAIN
Ceremonial at the Sun Spring

Whistle under the water,
Make the water bubble to the tones of
the flute.
I call the bluebird's song into the water:
Wee-keel! Wee-kee-keel!
Dawn is coming,
The morning star shines upon us.
Bluebird singing to the West clouds,
Bring the humming rain.

Water-rattles shake,
Flute whistles,
Star in Heaven shines.
I blow the oriole's song,
The yellow song of the North.
I call rain clouds with my rattles:
Wee-kee-kee, oriole.
Pattering rain.

To the South I blow my whistle,
To the red parrot of the South I call.
Send red lightning.
Under your wings
The forked lightning.
Thunder-rattles whirl
To the sky waters.
Fill the springs.
The water is moving.
Wait —

Whistle to the East
With a magpie voice:
Wee-keel! Wee-kee-keel!
Call the storm-clouds
That they come rushing.
Call the loud rain.

Why does it not come?
Who is bad?
Whose heart is evil?
Who has done wickedness?
I weep,
I rend my garments,
I grieve for the sin which is in this place.
My flute sobs with the voice of all birds
in the water.
Even to the six directions I weep and
despair.
Come, O winds, from the sides of the
sky,
Open your bird-beaks that rain may fall
down.
Drench our fields, our houses,
Fill the land
With tumult of rain.

UNCOLLECTED POEMS

ON "THE CUTTING OF AN AGATE" (BY W. B. YEATS)

Reading this book, I see an attic room
Brimful of heaps of dimly-shining
stuff,
Tumbled upon the floor. Here is
enough
To fashion winged Caps till day of doom.
This yarn is shimmering with a frosty
bloom
Of colours overlaid as with a rough
Patina of snow crystals. See! A puff
Of wind blows jewelled chaff to spark the
gloom.
It seems the storehouse of raw poesy,
Where unspun dreams are waiting to be
bought,
And where unwoven tapestries of thought
Lie ripe for the large looms of
prophecy.
A little handful of this harvesting
Would make most poets an ample cover-
ing.

A RAINY NIGHT

Shadows,
And white, moving light,
And the snap and sparkle of rain on the
window,
An electric lamp in the street
Is swinging, tossing,
Making the rain-runnelled window-glass
Glitter and palpitate.
In its silver lustre
I can see the old four-post bed,
With the fringes and balls of its canopy.
You are lying beside me, waiting,
But I do not turn,
I am counting the folds of the canopy.
You are lying beside me, waiting,
But I do not turn.
In the silver light you would be too
beautiful,
And there are ten pleats on this side of
the bed canopy,
And ten on the other.

A COMPARISON

This man is like a mechanical toy
Which runs, and streaks, and veers over
the carpet,
With a noise of thin edges of tin
Whirring upon one another
In spirals of shrillness.
Even when you pick it up,
The wheels of the toy continue to whirl,
Grating incessantly.
They beat, and wobble, and whiz,
Inconceivably rapid rings of blurred
spokes,
And the shrill scraping pierces one's ear-
drums
Like an auger.

MAY EVENING IN CENTRAL PARK

Lines of lamp-light
Splinter the black water,
And all through
The dim park
Are lamps
Hanging among the trees.
But they are only like fire-flies
Pricking the darkness,
And I lean my body against it
And spread out my fingers
To let it drift through them.
I am a swimmer
In the damp night,
Or a bird
Floating over the sucking grasses.
I am a lover
Tracking the silver foot-prints
Of the moon.
I am a young man,
In Central Park,
With Spring
Bursting over me.

The trees push out their young leaves,
Although this is not the country,
And I whisper beautiful, hot words,
Although I am alone,
And a few more steps

Will bring me
The glare and suffocation
Of bright streets.

THE ROAD TO THE MOUNTAIN

He rode along the turnpike way,
With yellow daffodils a-springing,
A poet on a flea-bitten gray.
The birds were singing.

Out from behind an oak-tree came
An ancient man, all bent and
tangled;
Like unwound wire, he was lame,
And his body jangled.

"So up the mountain is your speed!"
He shook his stick and coughed and
cackled.

"Up the great mountain, riding a steed
That's spavined and hackled.

Each hock is apple-puffed, his knees
Are broken, and he's badly
winded." —

The rusty voice stopped on a sneeze,
For no one minded.

The poet rode on through spotted shade,
His harness buckles ting-a-linging,
When down a forest-path skipped a
maid,
With wide skirts swinging.

She stopped a moment to gape and gaze,
And the budding elm-trees sprigged
her over

With sliding meshes of crown-green haze,
A butterfly cover.

"Your horse is very small," said she.

"If those four feet cannot trot faster,
You might as well stay where you be.
Think of it, Master.

An hour hence and scarce a mile
Will you be from where you now are
faring.

Why not dismount and stay a while,
For the sun is flaring."

Pit-pat, pit-pat, the beating hoofs
Scatters of pebbles and dust are
flinging,

Under the weaving, waving roofs,
Like birds a-winging.

Through the cobbled street of a little
town,
Round a corner, and past a turning,
The poet and his flea-bitten gray are
blown,
Like leaf-smoke burning.

A puff of gray, a darting feather;
Gravel pecking a window-pane;
A spark underfoot, a creak of leather;
They are up the lane.

Up the lane to the leaves again,
And trees and trees in endless string-
ing.
A flat, green square like a counterpane
And churchbells ringing.

Kettledrum strokes on an organ's drone,
The flea-bitten gray past the church
door canters,
Thudding drum echoes out of the stone,
Confusing the chanters.

Round hoofs pick, and nick, and fly.
A shadow close to white dust cling-
ing,
Shot at a line of purple sky,
And a hill wind stinging.

Waves awash and a ferry stalled.
Thunder-darkened, rain-ringed river.
Frantic cries of boat-men appalled.
A splash, a quiver.

Snorting rise on the further bank,
A flat-bellied gallop far on again,
Between thick bushes, steaming and dank,
Till sun dries rain.

He rides along the turnpike way,
With blue hills over green hills
springing.
A poet on a flea-bitten gray,
And the poet is singing.

ELEONORA DUSE

The talk is hushed,
In the domed theatre's self the lights go
out
While other lights flash on the eyes,

As the concealing curtain slowly lifts
Upon a mimic world, or grave or gay,
As artist's hand hath wrought.

The silent throng
Is bound together by one common aim,
One animating thought has brought
them there
In rows that curve expectant towards the
stage,
For they have come to see the self-same
play.
But this the only bond that makes them
one,
For each is here upon a different quest,
A difference rooted deep as are their
lives;
For they have minds as various
As are the shells the ebbtide leaves upon
The shingle of some island beach.

For some are here on pure amusement
bent,
Others come lured by the far fame of her
Who tonight will image forth the tragic
fate
Of one who lived and died long since,
Or else imbue the shadowy figure of
A poet's dream with palpitating life.
Others there are in search of sparks to
kindle
The slow fire of their torpid brains.
Others have wandered in they scarce
know how;
As sand that sifts all imperceptibly
Into some ancient temple's columned
hall,
The desert wind that urged it is so far
It hardly seems impelled by any law
But drifting aimlessly has drifted here.

Yet all have come to see the self-same
play.
But what they take away is not the same,
For none can go beyond what he has
known
And none can feel what was not felt
before;
No wandering half-forgotten moment
passed,
No volume read, no music heard, but
now
Bears fruit in deeper comprehension.

For she whom we have come to see to-
night
Is more to be divined and felt than seen.
And when she comes one yields one's
heart perforce,
As one might yield some noble instru-
ment
For her to draw its latent music forth.

For she herself vibrates to every thought,
And shades of feeling cross her face like
clouds
That trail their shadows over distant
hills,
Her being is like an aeolian harp
Clasped in a casement on some summer
night
Whence every breeze that passes draws a
sound,
Now harsh and wild, now sweet, now
quaintly gay,
But always musical, and always true.

Her voice is vibrant with a thousand
things;
Is sharp with pain, or choked with tears,
Or rich with love and longing.
Her little inarticulate sounds are spring
From depths of inner meaning which
embrace
A life's chaotic, vast experience.

As if a little, sudden gust of wind
Should blow aside the branches of a tree,
Revealing for an instant to our eyes
The deep night sky all twinkling full of
stars,
And then the branch sweep back and
shut it out
And leave us wondering, 'neath the rus-
tling leaves.

And as the evening lengthens, bit by bit,
Little by little, we discern the real.
'Tis that which holds us spellbound far,
far more
Than even her most consummate art can
do,
Through all the passion of a simulated
grief
And through the studied anguish learnt
by rote
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fears!

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